Gender, identity and representation in video games: an elective discourse-oriented course for Finnish EFL upper secondary school students.

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Suomen koulujen opetussuunnitelmat pyrkivät toteuttamaan ja edistämään tasa-arvoa, mutta tasa-arvon toteutuminen koulujen arjessa vaatii vielä työtä. Samaan aikaan videopeleistä on tullut suosittu harrastus nuorten ja aikuisten keskuudessa, mutta sekä pelit että peleihin liittyvä keskustelu ovat tasa-arvon suhteen jälkijunassa. Pelaaminen ei ole enää yksinomaan nuorten poikien harrastus. Monet oppijat sukupuoleen katsomatta pelaavat erilaisia pelejä ja osallistuvat pelejä koskevaan keskusteluun.

Tämän pro gradu -tutkielman tavoitteena on tuottaa lukio-opetukseen tarkoitettu kurssimateriaalipaketti, jonka avulla kuka tahansa opettaja pystyy lähestymään naisten representaatiota videopeleissä diskurssitutkimuksen näkökulmien kautta. Kurssimateriaalipaketti koostuu opettajan ohjeista ja 19x90 minuutin tuntisuunnitelmista. Vaikka materiaalipakettia pystyy soveltamaan melkein millä tahansa kielellä (myös oppijoiden äidinkielellä mediakriittisyyden näkökulmasta), se on suunniteltu nimenomaan lukion englannin kielen kurssiksi. Lisäksi tämä kurssi on tarkoitettu toimimaan kokonaisuutena, joka etenee identiteettikysymyksistä pelikulttuurin esittelyyn ja siitä yksityiskohtaisempiin diskurssitutkimuksen ilmiöihin. Kurssista on mahdollista irrottaa yksittäisiä osia ja tehtäviä muuhun käyttöön tietyin varauksin.

Kurssin keskeiset näkökulmat perustuvat sisällön osalta feministiseen kriittiseen diskurssianalyysiin ja pedagogiikan puolella konstruktivismiin. Oppijat ovat tällä kurssilla oman oppimisensa suurimpia myötävaikuttajia ja he pääsevätkin tuumimaan sukupuoleen ja tasa-arvoon liittyviä kysymyksiä ryhmissä yhteistoiminnallisen oppimismenetelmän kautta. Kieltä kurssilla lähestytään CLIL-menetelmän (content and language integrated learning) kautta. Formaalia kieltenopetusta kurssilla ei ole, mutta kurssin materiaalit edellyttävät että oppijat keskustelevat kurssin sisällöistä ja ilmiöistä keskenään opetuskielellä mahdollisimman paljon.

Säilytyspaikka – Depository

Muita tietoja – Additional information

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1 Introduction

According to the Finnish national core curriculum (LOPS 2003: 12, 2015), upper secondary education should be striving to promote equal rights and wellbeing. Despite these noble goals, Suortamo et al. (2010) have noticed that in actuality schools have a lot of room for improvement when it comes to addressing attitudes related to gender and sexuality. Put simply, modern Finnish schools are not yet environments where all people are treated equally. According to Suortamo et al. (ibid.), both students and teachers suffer from a heteronormative approach to education and social interactions. While Suortamo et al. (2010: 9) acknowledge the efforts to promote equal rights, they seem to feel that teachers are not yet suitably equipped to embrace diversity in schools. Reflecting on my own experiences in school in the 2000s, gender and sexuality were not discussed in detail even at the upper secondary education level. Moreover, I have discussed the issue with younger students who still maintain that Finnish upper secondary education does not dedicate enough resources to these matters. Therefore, I perceive a need for a course which gives students a chance to explore gender issues while helping them to grow according to the goals of our national core curriculum. In addition, I believe there is a need for material package that almost any teacher can use, hopefully lowering the barrier to offering this kind of content to students across Finland.

Schools are hardly the only heteronormative environment where students spend time. In recent years, video gaming has become an increasingly popular hobby and even a profession – both to people who make games and people who play them. Although gaming has been seen primarily as a hobby for young boys, Entertainment Software Association (henceforth ESA, 2014: 3) reported that 48% of American gamers were women in 2014. Moreover, ESA (ibid.) found that the average video game player is 31 years old. I started my gaming career with my cousins' NES (Nintendo Entertainment System, the 8-bit console) and I have been playing video games ever since. I am not entirely certain at what point I started identifying as a gamer, but I believe I have

grown as a gamer even during my university studies. To me, gaming is essentially like any other hobby – one that you do not necessarily drop when you come to a certain age. Having met my fair share of gamers, it is also my understanding that gaming has become increasingly popular among people of different ages, regardless of their ethnicity, gender or sexuality. That being said, many games cater to the young, straight white male as the expected audience. Furthermore, online gaming is still seen as biased against women in favor of men, as seen in an article by *Polygon* (2014). Indeed, the article mentions that many women experience sexual harassment online. Saarela, Nuopponen and Raatikainen (2011: 121) have found similar results: 18.2% of the women they interviewed felt that they had encountered discrimination based on their gender in gaming-related activities. It appears that video games are presently a site for social power struggle – one that can be utilized during this course to examine our expectations regarding gender roles and identities.

While video games and video gaming communities have their share of problems in addressing diverse audiences, there has been a drive among gamers and some game developers to create more diverse representations in games. Similarly to Finnish schools, video games and video gaming communities are becoming more aware of social issues (for example, see *New York Times*, 2012). As one effect, there has been a lot of discussion both for and against diversifying the representation of gender and sexuality in video games. I believe there is an urgent need to teach students how to participate in this discussion critically. While participating in the discussion is going to require media literacy, it is also important that students understand video games as a cultural environment. Similarly, knowing how representation, gender and identity are negotiated through language can give students the insight they need to understand themselves and others better.

Indeed, the purpose of the present study is to develop an elective upper secondary school course that addresses the need to discuss gender issues in schools and a lack of teaching materials that are related to video games as a cultural environment. While the explicit focus of the course will be on the representation of women in video games,

the course materials and themes deal more broadly with issues regarding gender, representation and identity with the aim of informing students about how language is used to construct and contest representations. The course uses feminist critical discourse analytical theory to inspect how language and power are tied (especially in issues of gender). More specifically, the definition of feminist critical discourse analysis comes from Lazar (2005: 2-4), who believes that many critical discourse analytical studies with a focus in gender usually adopt a critical feminist view towards gender relations. Furthermore, Lazar (ibid.) notes that those studies are often motivated by a need to change and challenge existing notions about gender relations. The course adopts a constructivist stance towards exploring how gender, identity and representation are constituted in social settings. Furthermore, the course relies a lot on student input and group work by utilizing the cooperative learning method. While the course does not seek to teach language items explicitly, some language learning is likely to occur due to the content and language integrated learning (CLIL) approach the course uses. In addition, the course materials mainly consist of authentic content – both samples from games and texts produced by video gaming communities. While they may be sometimes challenging, I believe that the cooperative learning method will help students to work together to overcome difficulties related to understanding, which may in turn lead to more language learning. While it would be possible to discuss these issues without authentic materials, there is an overabundance of appropriate and critical content produced by video gaming communities, in addition to which examples from real games are likely to have more impact than teacher-produced illustrations. It should also be noted that while this course has been designed with the old national core curriculum (LOPS 2003, 2015) as a guideline, I feel that it is compatible with the goals set in the new national core curriculum (OPS 2016, 2015). In particular, this course could reinforce diverse growth and give students tools with which they can work on their identities.

This master's thesis has been organized into two parts. Firstly, there is the theoretical part that includes discussion about the main themes of the course, as well as the teaching methods I am using. The first section starts with a brief discussion on video

games and video gaming culture, after which I will present how the course approaches language through discourse analysis. The discourse analysis section will also detail the four other discourse analytical concepts that are central to this course: gender, identity, representation and multimodality. Having done that, I will discuss the teaching methods used in the course, content and language integrated learning and the cooperative learning method, followed by the theoretical underpinnings of the course materials and assessment. Secondly, I have made a stand-alone material package for the entire course, which any teacher can use to conduct the course. The course consists of 19 lessons that take approximately 90 minutes to conduct and it has been planned for a class of 20 students. It should be noted here that I have not had a chance to test the course materials in practice, which is definitely an area of development that needs to be addressed before I would recommend the course for wider use. While an individual teacher may still want to use the course materials, they should do so with a critical eye and readiness to alter the course contents according to how much time and skill the materials require to utilize.

2 Video gaming culture

This chapter will provide a brief overview on selected aspects of video gaming and video gaming culture that will be discussed during the course. While it is not necessary to delve in the history of video gaming too excessively, it is somewhat relevant to know about what video games are before discussing gamers, gaming communities and women as gamers specifically. This chapter will also discuss how the course makes use of different video gaming sources in the material package.

A recent study – and an attempt to combine the study of video games with discourse analysis – by Gee (2015: 61) defines video games as virtual words, claiming that they can essentially be read like any other text. As Gee (2015: 62) states: "Video games, however, are non-real worlds that can respond." To reiterate, he believes that we are capable of imagining all kinds of scenarios, but video games offer a new kind of text

(based on a non-real world) that allows us to explore our options and to get responses for our actions (Gee, 2015: 62). Video games, from the perspective of the present study, can be basically anything that includes a device, some kind of interface and a player (or several players). I believe it is counterproductive to claim that games played on smartphones are somehow worse than console games, although they are certainly very different. While many video games have some kind of goal you have to accomplish by utilizing a set of rules a game has set, some games offer players a lot of freedom in what they wish to do with the game – games like this are often referred to as sandbox or open world games (i.e. *Minecraft* or even most *Fallout* games). In his study, Gee (2015: 46) argues that all games have a system of syntax and semantics: the game mechanics. While Gee (2015: 46) largely argues that players interpret a game world through visual cues (for example, by noticing that an obviously decrepit bridge may not be safe to cross), he also argues that games are multimodal, involving images, words and sounds (Gee, 2015: 56). Thus, the decrepit bridge might also creak and sound like it is about to fall apart. There might be a sign warning about the condition of the bridge. If your objective as a player is to cross the bridge, you might pay attention to any of these cues to understand what the game is trying to communicate about the condition of the bridge.

Gaming genres can sometimes be a little misleading, but generally one can expect a certain type of a game to subscribe to a set of conventions. For instance, Apperley (2006: 7) states that video game genres are "-- loose aesthetic clusters based around video games." Fairclough (1995: 13-14) makes a similar observation about the nature of genre in general. He seems to argue that only some genres have restrictive and well-defined norms that dictate their structure. According to him, "individual genres and discourse types appear to be largely accounts of ideal types, for actual texts are generally to a greater or lesser degree constituted through mixing these types" (Fairclough, 1995: 189). Expanding on the notion of a video game genre, Apperley (2006: 9-11) considers four separate parts of video games: genre, platform, mode and milieu. Genre, according to him, is not focused on the visual properties of a game, but the types of interactions it offers. For example, you could expect armed conflict in a

First Person Shooter (FPS). Injuring or killing an enemy with gunfire is a likely interaction and the game will probably have many ways of telling you more about the condition of your own avatar (abstract hit points, or maybe a blurred screen and heavy breathing and so on). As for the importance of platform, Apperley (2006: 10) notes that a game designed for one platform (e.g. Playstation 3) might not be mechanically the same if it is ported to another platform, such as PC. One example of this could be *Dark Souls*, which played magnificently on Playstation 3, but felt clunky when played with a keyboard and a mouse on PC (the control scheme did not translate well in my opinion). A game designed to be played on two screens, likewise, would be different when played on just one screen. Mode (related to genre, not multimodality) is seen as how a game is experienced, but Apperley (ibid.) focuses the notion on a player's ability to move through video game space. He draws attention to *linear* and *non-linear* games. If we return to the example about the bridge, you must find a way over the bridge in a *linear* game because that is the only way you can advance in the game. A *non-linear* game, however, would allow you to pick your own route to the destination, which may not even lead you to the bridge in the first place. Furthermore, (Apperley, 2006: 10) notes that multiplayer games are often *non-linear*. How other players behave might change how you experience the game. If the bridge you are trying to cross is situated in a multiplayer environment, other players may have already found how to cross it and they could try to help or hinder you. In doing so, they would be affecting your ability to move through the virtual space, which should be consistent with how Apperley (2006: 10-11) discusses mode. Finally, Apperley (2006: 11) uses milieu to describe the visual genre of a game. He argues that horror games are made more efficient by the way they use visual cues. I believe multimodal cues like sound, as seen in Gee (2015: 56), would also be situated in how Apperley (ibid.) defines milieu. As seen above, the appearance (and sound) of the bridge could give important clues about its condition. In addition, milieu could refer to the game's graphics – whether the game we are playing is highly photorealistic or based on a cartoon representation, however, a decrepit bridge would remain decrepit (even if it was represented with different visual and auditory clues).

The present study discusses first person shooter (FPS) games, massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPGs or simply MMOs), role-playing games (RPGs) and sandbox games. To start with, many FPS games feature just that – a lot of shooting from a first person perspective. Apperley (2006: 15-16) labels FPS games under action games, which also cover third person action-focused games where the focus is on (as one might guess) performing several meaningful actions, which often require (player) skill to execute. In a FPS game, the action could be focused around maneuvering your avatar in game environment while trying to shoot opposing avatars. Second, regarding RPGs, Apperley (2006: 17) makes a good observation when he mentions that while role-playing games are closely tied to fantasy as a literary genre, one also has to consider the effect pen-and-paper RPGs like *Dungeons and Dragons* have had on RPGs as video games. Indeed, games based on *Dungeons and Dragons* (such as *Neverwinter Nights*) play differently from games based on *Vampire the Masquerade* (namely *Vampire the Masquerade: Bloodlines*). Apperley (ibid.) further argues that RPGs as video games have lost their collaborative storytelling aspect in favor of focusing on game mechanics to overcome challenges. Apperley (2006: 18) notes, however, that the social aspect of RPGs seems to have moved to gaming communities. I would also argue that the collaborative storytelling aspect of RPGs is preserved in games like *Neverwinter Nights*, which allow for multiple players to role-play with each other based on mechanics supplied by the game. *Sword Coast Legends* (2015) is another example of a very recent attempt to preserve the collaborative storytelling mechanic online. Indeed, sometimes RPGs are focused entirely on the online aspect. Unlike the previous examples, massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPGs) are usually games played by thousands or even millions of players (often spread across several time zones and servers, admittedly) and they usually have the character building and item-gathering element that single-player (or smaller scale multiplayer) RPGs have. Finally, sandbox or open-world games feature a fair amount of player freedom. Usually this means that a player has the option to explore the game world and rules at their leisure, which indicates that sandbox games have to be *non-linear* by definition. These genres or game types can overlap. For instance, many *Fallout* games can be considered sandbox RPGs. Likewise, a *Minecraft*

server might host regular player versus player tournaments, in which case the gameplay is not too far removed from FPS games (although *Minecraft* is a lot simpler than *Call of Duty*, *Counter-Strike* or *Battlefield* when it comes to FPS mechanics, real time first person combat can occur in both). The *Mass Effect* series could be considered RPGs with FPS elements, as well.

In addition, games often overlap with literary genres. For instance, *Fallout* games are set in a post-apocalyptic universe. Based on the definitions offered by Apperley (2006: 9-11), one could argue that the post-apocalyptic setting is mostly conveyed through the milieu in what the game world looks and sounds like (ruined buildings, wasteland, jury-rigged gadgets), but also how the game interacts with the player (genre). For instance, *Fallout: New Vegas* offers a hardcore mode that measures your thirst, hunger and the amount of sleep you get, which further enhances the post-apocalyptic survival experience. Similarly, your mode of transportation is likely restricted to something appropriate to the setting (walking being common). In the same vein, *Mass Effect* takes place in a science fiction setting. Since both games could be considered RPGs because of their character development elements, it becomes clear that fantasy is not the only literary genre that inspires RPGs. I believe that analyzing how games subvert and subscribe to genre conventions could be a topic for an entire study in its own right, which is definitely confirmed by Apperley (2006) and the plethora of studies he refers to. While it is important that students are able to define and discuss video game genres, the present study is mostly concerned with genres in relation to how they invoke certain tropes, which I would classify as recurring patterns within a set of common conventions. For instance, the damsel in distress is a common trope in many video games, as seen in *Feminist Frequency* (2015a). Similarly, one might expect an open-world fantasy RPG like *Witcher 3* to feature a fair amount of bandits – but it is important to note that none of the bandits (with a scant few named exceptions) are women. When I played *Counter-Strike* almost a decade ago, it did not feature any women as playable characters either. The terrorists and counter-terrorists were all men. *Fallout: New Vegas,* on the other hand, has women who are raiders. On the surface, the difference is based purely on milieu, but the game also has perks

(abilities) that make you more effective against women or men specifically, which I would attribute under mode because it affects how you progress through the game (offering alternative options for advancement in conversation or by making it easier to gun down people acting as obstacles). Genre could be relevant too, considering that the perks give you interactions that are, in my opinion, more sexually loaded than the standard persuasion options to players who do not use the perks, affecting the types of interactions you get in the game. Understanding what kind of world a game is building is important for analyzing power relations and norms within the game. As a concrete observation, gender in *Fallout: New Vegas* is a binary system that is never really questioned (and which is enforced mechanically with the perks I mentioned above).

2.1 Different gamers and gaming communities

There is some room for debate about what can be considered a game. For example, games played on smartphones and Facebook games have received some derision, yet at the same time both kinds of games seem fairly popular. Similarly, there is lively discussion across several gaming communities (in forums, gaming magazines, chat rooms and more) about games that are worth playing, or games where an achievement means something. This discussion, in turn, is related to casual and hardcore gamers, which we could call the discourse of professional gaming or gaming as a profession, for example. In fact, the discussion about what it means to be a casual or a hardcore gamer is a convoluted one and it may have many implications. One might not be surprised to hear that there are attitudes according to which women are primarily casual gamers which, according to these discourses, is a bad thing because women do not have the skill to be anything more than casual gamers. Being labeled as a casual gamer can be associated with a lack of skill or ambition instead of a gaming preference, although *World of Warcraft* is a fine example of a game that has content for both casual and hardcore gamers. Indeed, two people may call the same game casual and hardcore at the same time. In 2011, our *League of Legends* team (LoCC)

placed among the top 16 teams in an Alienware tournament, being the best Finnish team. I have also achieved the *proven healer* title in *World of Warcraft* during the *Mists of Pandaria* expansion. According to *MMO Champion* (2015), only 1.9% of active *WoW* players managed to get one *proven* achievement during *MoP*. These would be examples of achievements that might be respected in some gaming communities. Even so, I view games as something one does for fun. I can, indeed, be surprisingly casual in many games, even though I may be relatively dedicated in others. However, the division between casual and hardcore gamers can be harmful, especially when one cannot enjoy playing a game due to unrealistic expectations (e.g. *I am only good at this game when I'm among the top 5% of players*). At the same time, there are plenty of people who enjoy this kind of competition and challenge. The root of the problem is that many gaming communities and many men tend to view women as inherently casual gamers. Men do not usually face similar expectations based on their gender. As it is**,** women do not always get to enjoy being casual gamers whereas men can be as casual as they like and it has little bearing on how they are viewed as men. Nakamura (2012) explores this very idea by stating that men are often considered members of gaming culture automatically, whereas women are not. Indeed, Nakamura (2012) says: "It is abundantly apparent that the more gaming capital becomes identified with white masculinity, the more bitter the battle over its distribution, possession, and circulation will become." Furthermore, she emphasizes the need for more women to gain positions of power in gaming communities (as critics, game developers and gamers), although she also seems to fear that women's efforts to gain influence in gaming communities will be met with increasing resistance. Interestingly, *PC Gamer* (2014) reported that women play more PC games than men in the US in 2014. According to the magazine, men played more FPS and MMO games, whereas women made 54% of the people who play PC role-playing games (such as *Dragon Age: Inquisition*).

From my perspective as a lifelong gamer, there is no one gaming culture that neatly covers all gamers, although one could seek to make some generalizations. Different gaming platforms (PC, Xbox, Playstation, Nintendo etc.) have communities built by

players who specifically focus on games played on those platforms. For example, *League of Legends*, a popular PC game, has several active communities that discuss different aspects of the game, ranging from webcomics (*Tales of Valoran*, 2015) that are more focused on characters to detailed discussions about gameplay (*Mobafire*, 2015). Similarly, certain genres such as role-playing games might have exclusive communities. At the same time, it is entirely possible that people from different communities overlap – and that international English-speaking role-playing communities are different from, say, how gaming culture and gaming communities work in Russia, China or Japan. In some cases, these communities mix within one game, but it is also fairly common to see the communities separated within the game as well. Thus, you could have a Russian role-playing community and a Russian player versus player community in one game (e.g. *EVE online*, 2015) and those communities would be different from each other. In the same game, same server even (since *EVE online* only has one server where everyone plays regardless of their geographical location), there are European and American role-playing and player versus player communities, which are also different from each other. While this course will focus mainly on communities that use English as a lingua franca, it is also important to remind students about other communities, which may have their own historical, cultural and practical differences. English-speaking gaming communities certainly include a massive amount of people, but they do not represent gaming in its entirety. That being said, it is necessary to narrow the course's focus due to time and skill resources available (although cooperation with other language teachers/courses might be possible). While English is a very common lingua franca, other languages (such as German) can easily fulfill the same function. In 2013, Internet World Stats (2015) estimated that 28.6% of active Internet users speak English, Chinese being a close second with 23.2% of active Internet users. Russian (3.1%) and German (2.9%) still make it to the top ten languages of active Internet users, although Spanish, Arabic, Portuguese and Japanese are all better represented (in descending order). These statistics are relevant because many gaming communities are based on the Internet, although local communities certainly exist.

2.2 Women as gamers

Considering the focus of this course, the representation of women in video games, it is important to pay some attention to the history of women as gamers. Saarela, Nuopponen and Raatikainen (2011: 109) point out that gaming has been a hobby associated primarily with young boys. Even at the moment of writing, one can still find games in the Finnish version of *Facebook* listed under games/toys, even if the game in question was intended for mature audiences. Saarela et al. (ibid.) note that the amount of women playing video games has increased dramatically in the past decade (by 2011). Regardless, they also found out that the increased presence of women as gamers has done little to change how games are still viewed primarily as a male-dominated space. Indeed, Saarela et al. (ibid.) point out that attitudes towards women as gamers leave much to be desired. Blogs like *Fat, Ugly or Slutty* (2015) or *Not In The Kitchen Anymore* (2015) are excellent examples of the kind of harassment women have to put up with online. Furthermore, gaming communities can be toxic environments for just about anyone. *Polygon* (2012) published an article about how *League of Legends* combats toxic behavior, which is a term that includes bullying, harassment and other things that make online environments unpleasant to many people. In addition to having dedicated 30 people to the task, Riot Games (the developer) seems to employ science in order to understand and alter how players are behaving. It is my hope that feminist critical discourse analysis can inform game design in a similar manner in order to promote equal rights. Considering how many women play games these days, there is certainly a reason to look critically at the games we play. In 2014, Entertainment Software Association (2014: 3) reported that 48% of American gamers are women. Moreover, ESA (ibid.) found that the average video game player is 31 years old. Saarela et al. (2011: 109) found out that the amount of women as gamers in Finland in 2008 was 33%. Based on these findings, it seems clear to me that gamers are a very diverse group of people, which is a fact that many gaming communities are still struggling to recognize. Especially the role of women as capable gamers is downplayed too often in my opinion, although I feel attitudes in the communities I frequent have already been shifting for the better.

To support my personal views as a longtime gamer, I point out that Saarela et al. (2011: 110-111) found out similar attitudes about women as gamers. They found out that women who had played video games for less than seven years were likely to have beliefs about whether women should play games at all, whereas women who had played games for over seven years were more confident about their abilities and the range of games they were able to play successfully. Indeed, Saarela et al. (2011: 111) note that women who had played video games for over seven years trusted their own skills and believed that they would be able to hold their own in *men's games*. The assumption that there are games for men and games for women is an interesting one in itself. Stereotypically, one might assume that women are more likely to play *Candy Crush* because it is easy, fun and colorful – although, as *PC Gamer* (2014) reported, women in the US actually play more role-playing games on PC than men and that many women actually identify as hardcore gamers. Men, in turn, would play *Starcraft II* or *Call of Duty* because they are supposedly good at strategy or fast-paced action games, the latter of which is actually consistent with *PC Gamer*'s (ibid.) report in the sense that men play more *Call of Duty*. Having lost handily to women in all of the above games, however, I feel there is little truth to these divisions, or the assumption that men are the hardcore gamers or inherently better at a certain type of game.

Of the 622 respondents in the study conducted by Saarela et al. (2011: 121), 18.2% felt that they had encountered discrimination based on their gender (here: women). While Saarela et al. (ibid.) conclude that the percentage is relatively low, they believe that the problem cannot be entirely ignored based on the amount of women who feel that they have been discriminated against. Moreover, they found that women who have experienced discrimination often feel that it is connected to their gender. Women are not taken seriously as gamers, they are laughed at and their skills are belittled, Saarela et al. (ibid.) report. The above findings are consistent with Nakamura's (2012) view: "Women of color gamers who publicly identify with the culture of gaming find themselves shunned, mocked, and generally treated in ways that are far worse than one could find in almost any other social context." During this

course, I hope that we can also look at examples that portray women as gamers, discussing both the issue of casual and hardcore gamers *(What does it mean to be a gamer*?) and how women and men play games. I believe that understanding women as gamers can help to alleviate some of the negative stereotypes associated with women when it comes to playing and excelling at – or just plain enjoying – video games.

2.3 Summary

Just as there is a diverse range of games to play, there are also many kinds of gamers who play them. While the present study does not make any statement about which games are worth studying, the examples used throughout the material package are often focused on MMORPG, RPG and FPS games simply because I am the most familiar with them. Moreover, these are often the games that offer a lot of resources for studying the representation of women in video games. Of course, there are also games like *Tetris* which might not be equally interesting in this regard. I see the above genres as a mix of common conventions and sets of possibilities. For example, MMORPGs and RPGs usually allow players to choose the gender of their character. However, there is a fair chance that the armor the player characters wear does not treat players equally based on their character's gender. Furthermore, these games often have an overarching story that involves many non-playable characters, who can be analyzed as well.

How one defines gaming culture or gaming cultures depends a little on how one wants to define culture. It seems clear to me that there are many very different groups of players out there. While many gamers no doubt own several platforms, your choice of platform might still influence who you play with (i.e. it is rare to see PC players and console players in the same game, although exceptions exist). Different games, likewise, attract different audiences. As I suggested above, there may be a lot of variation even within a single game. When *Neverwinter Nights* was released, I noticed that there were major differences between communities and servers that were built

around player versus player combat, role-playing (especially persistent worlds) and social interactions between players. Back then, a social server was not much different from today's avatar-based chat programs. While people spent time together *out of character* in player versus player based arena servers as well, discussions and activities were often more focused on the mechanical aspects of the game (such as how to build a character who *kicks the most butt*). Big games like *EVE Online* can also feature sizable communities separated by language. For instance, I still have not gotten a very good inside perspective on how Russian players experience the game. It is not at all uncommon to hear people talking of Russian players as an entity (e.g. *the Russians captured the station*).

When one thinks of *a gamer*, they might often think of *a straight white boy*. This chapter should challenge that perception. A considerable amount of gamers are women, for example. While we (as gamers) are starting to acknowledge that women have genuine interest and skill in games, there is still much work to be done before women will be truly treated as equals. It is not difficult to find instances of women being reduced to flat objects in games. In addition, sexist attitudes seem to have deep roots in many gaming cultures. Games often perpetuate these attitudes, although there are also some recent advances that show that game developers are not universally blind to how women are treated in games. When it comes to playing, designing and criticizing games, it is often men who are heard at the expense of women. A good majority of game designers are men, for instance. While expertise helps women to become accepted as gamers, it is my hope that by raising awareness about gender and representation in video games this course can do a small part in making women feel more comfortable as gamers no matter how skilled or committed to gaming they are.

3 Discourse analysis and gender

This section will cover how this course views language. The basic principles of the

course follow discourse analytical theory, which is grounded on social constructivism (chapter 3.1). Since the purpose of the course is to provide a critical look at the representation of women in video games, it stands to reason that the course utilizes critical discourse analytical theory. More specifically, the course's point of view is based on feminist critical discourse analysis, which will be introduced in chapter 3.2. Through this theoretical background, the course will explore gender (chapter 3.3), identity (chapter 3.4), representation (chapter 3.5) and multimodality (chapter 3.6) in video games.

3.1 Discourse analysis

Discourse analysis, a qualitative research method with roots in social constructivism, forms the core theoretical background of the entire course. According to Pietikäinen and Mäntynen (2009: 22-26), there are multiple views on what discourse analysis is. While the course will mostly utilize feminist critical discourse analytical theory, it is still necessary to teach the students taking the course at least the very basics of discourse analysis. Questions such as how discourse analysis views language and what 'discourse' stands for will be covered during the course. From that point of view, it is reasonable to inspect some ground-level theoretical assumptions this course makes. Since discourse analysis inspects language as social activity (Pietikäinen and Mäntynen, 2009: 14 and Fairclough 1995: 7), it is suited for analysis and discussion based on games and gaming media. There are countless games that incorporate some kind of social activity as a core gameplay element and games themselves could be considered cultural artifacts, which are influenced by their sociocultural context. Even single player games can be highly social considering that they are often discussed with friends and other members of the gaming communities that one belongs to. Furthermore, Gee (2015: 1-4) makes a detailed argument for studying games as a form of communication, or worlds to have conversations with. That is to say, even a lone player can interpret a game in a meaningful way. In this regard, one could consider video games as suitable for analysis as movies or other similar texts.

In addition to describing language as social activity, Pietikäinen and Mäntynen (2009: 14-15) further elaborate that the purpose of discourse analysis is to study how different realities and events are given a meaning, and what consequences there are for giving any event a meaning. Indeed, Pietikäinen and Mäntynen (2009: 11-12) point out that there is no single, lasting definition for words and expressions. As seen in Gee (2015: 6), meaning is a matter of social conventions. For example, the word "red" could be associated with a common quasi-religious tradition in December or the stop sign, very much depending on one's present context (see Pietikäinen and Mäntynen 2009: 12 for a similar example). Context, in itself, is an interesting term. Pietikäinen and Mäntynen (ibid.) discuss at least time, place and situation when describing different contexts. Thus, red could be a very festive color towards the end of December in certain parts of the world, but it will most definitely mean the stop sign if you are sitting in a car, looking at one. Given how meanings are context-dependent and potentially negotiable, it seems clear to me that one cannot argue that the language we use simply is the way it is. Thus, the way games represent men and women, for example, is definitely a part of the social reality we live in – but there is no reason those representations cannot be discussed or even changed. Just as red does not always mean one thing, women in games should not always be seen through the same perspective. Games are not portraying women as they are; women are being portrayed in games as people want to portray them, which is often through a very narrow and stereotypical lens. According to Fairclough (2001: 3), it is possible to resist and change common-sense assumptions about (e.g.) how games should be by raising consciousness of how language and power are intertwined. Indeed, Fairclough (2001: 57) notes that power is not permanent. The way women are represented in video games can be changed by raising awareness, as in the present course, by offering alternative representations.

Like discourse analysis, discourse itself has multiple meanings. For example, Pietikäinen and Mäntynen (2009: 22-28) introduce one definition, according to which discourse could be units larger than a sentence in their context, which is similar to

Gee's (2015: 106) 'discourse': "-- stretches of talk or text, language in use in context." Pietikäinen and Mäntynen (ibid.) also speak about the dual-focus of discourse analysis: units larger than a sentence in their context and language in use. Pietikäinen and Mäntynen (2009: 26) further elaborate that it is impossible to produce an exhaustive definition of discourse and that a researcher should choose a focus – although it is possible to shift focus and the focus itself might change, discourses being dynamic concepts rather than pieces of fixed reality. That in mind, I am content with utilizing the focus introduced by Pietikäinen and Mäntynen (2009: 26-28) and Gee (2015: 106-108), especially since they serve the needs of the course well. As a whole, Pietikäinen and Mäntynen (ibid.) use discourse to refer to all linguistic and semiotic activity that has interactional and social norms and consequences, which captures the multimodal nature of most video gaming discourses excellently. In addition, the definition by Pietikäinen and Mäntynen (2009: 27-28) includes a division between 'discourse' and 'a discourse', the former meaning language as social activity and the latter being used for historically resilient, recognizable means of constructing meanings and describing various phenomena and events from a certain perspective and in a predefined way (e.g. the discourse of feminism in games and gaming-related media). Litosseliti and Sunderland (2002) give a similar definition, describing discourse as language which communicates a meaning in a context. While they mention that sometimes discourse can refer to spoken interaction only, in this course discourse stands for both spoken and written texts. Indeed, discourse is here seen as a multimodal phenomenon – a fact that will be discussed in more detail further below in section 3.6. To account for the multimodal nature of games, I will also focus on how Gee (2011: 29) defines Discourse (not to be confused with discourse): "I use the term "Discourse," with a capital "D," for ways of combining and integrating language, actions, interactions, ways of thinking, believing, valuing, and using various symbols, tools, and objects to enact a particular sort of socially recognizable identity." Gee (2015: 107) later expands that he uses Discourse to represent historically "recognizable identities", mentioning *a lawyer* and *a feminist* as examples. Gee (2015: 106) also connects the notion of Discourse with avatar. He says that Discourses "are ways to enact and recognize socially meaningful identities" and further explains that

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avatars are much the same. Like a Discourse, an avatar is a body, an identity and a tool-kit (Gee, 2015: 106-108). On a practical level, this could mean that we can inspect the avatar of a video game character (whether playable or non-playable) to see what meanings, or Discourses, are attached to them through multimodal language use.

Both Fairclough (2001: 31) and Pietikäinen and Mäntynen (2009: 27-28) place special relevance on how the micro and macro levels of language use are tied – or how linguistic choices can have societal effects and how existing interpretations of reality can shape language use, which is also discussed in Fairclough (2001: 30-34). Indeed, Pietikäinen and Mäntynen (2009: 52-53) state that language shapes reality. The view, as explained by them, is based on constructivism, which is a theory about how we understand how our reality works and how that understanding is achieved. Pietikäinen and Mäntynen (ibid.) further elaborate that we can use language to describe a topic, ourselves, others and the common thinking and acting patterns of our time and culture. In other words, we can use language to represent various phenomena. From a broad perspective, representation (see section 3.5) is a crucial concept for discourse analysis in general. Pietikäinen and Mäntynen (ibid.) are mostly interested in how the world and different agents are described, what relationships are built around and between the described parties and how linguistic resources are used. Moreover, section 3.3 further explores how language shapes gender, as noted by Litosseliti and Sunderland (2002: 5-6).

According to Pietikäinen and Mäntynen (2009: 53), the concept of discursive power is largely based on the power of discourse to shape our understanding about the surrounding reality. They note how even a single expression can have power and, indeed, how single expressions (both past and present) eventually make up discourses and the larger network of language itself. Pietikäinen and Mäntynen (ibid.) note, however, that language is not always a source of power: sometimes language is a site for struggle, such as when people disagree on common terms and definitions. Considering this, it is relatively easy to see why representation is an important concept for this course. Indeed, representation and gender are the most important

concepts discussed during the course.

The views on discourse analysis discussed above are very benign, but the aim of the course is not to delve into the most complex matters of discourse analysis or to give a broad view of the recent advances made in the field. Indeed, a basic concept like language as social activity (something a discourse analyst might almost take for granted) might still be new to a student taking this course. At the same time, the limited focus on gender, representation and identity inevitably narrows down the possibilities of more thorough discussion on discourse analysis. The above does not mean that discourse analysis will be underutilized in the course. On the contrary, something as simple as how a female character is dressed in a game and what narrative she is given is a product of language as social action. There is no single truth defining how a female character should dress in a game, although genre (which is not a focus of this course, although it may be discussed briefly) guides the selection a little. Regardless, Pietikäinen and Mäntynen (2009: 12-26) also point out that in addition to studying meanings given to certain events (like how a female character is perceived based on their dress or narrative), it is important to remember that there is no single meaning that is true above all other meanings, although different people may certainly value different interpretations. In fact, Pietikäinen and Mäntynen (ibid.) also describe language as a system that is not purely linguistic. Indeed, to them, language is a complex resource in which meanings are continuously under scrutiny. Given the fluidity of meanings and contexts, language use can have varied results. Furthermore, language is not always transparent: sometimes the writer's intentions may be obscured or even concealed, which emphasizes the need for critical media literacy – a skill that is definitely supported by even a basic understanding of discourse analysis.

To reiterate, discourse analysis is defined and introduced in the course as a background theory that informs the more specialized approach of feminist critical discourse analysis, which is used to define the key concepts utilized during the course (gender, representation, identity). Discussing discourse analysis is still relevant, however, since its core principles may very well be unknown to the students taking

the course. Moreover, knowing something about discourse analysis in general may help students to choose similar studies in a university, should they choose to pursue an academic path such as applied linguistics. In addition, discourse analysis (and critical discourse analysis in particular) is very well suited for observing cultural discussion and forming educated opinions based on one's observations, because it offers tools and perspectives which help people to understand texts produced by others. While other theoretical frameworks could apply, the focus of discourse analysis is almost impeccably suited for deconstructing some prevalent gender stereotypes that seem inherent in video games and related media. It is also worth remembering that discourse analysis is an approach that may help students to view everything they see and hear in a new way, and to be open to multiple interpretations of seemingly self-evident events, given how (especially critical discourse) analysis is prone to challenging existing givens, or at the very least making people aware of such givens in the first place.

3.2 Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis

Feminist critical discourse analysis is the main theoretical framework through which gender, representation and identity will be explored during this course. In this section, I will define the view on feminist CDA the course utilizes. At the same time, I will discuss the broader framework of critical discourse analysis, noting similarities between explicitly feminist CDA and CDA in general. While elaborating on these theoretical choices, I will also explain how and why they serve the needs of the course.

Understandably, critical discourse analysis has a lot in common with discourse analysis. Therefore it should come as no surprise that what Pietikäinen and Mäntynen (2009) say about discourse and discourse analysis also applies to CDA. While Wodak and Meyer (2001: 29) introduce critical discourse analysis as a problem-oriented approach that is not focused on linguistic items, such as grammatical forms, it should be noted that Fairclough (1995: 188) argues that textual analysis can enrich critical

discourse analysis. For instance, Fairclough (ibid) draws attention to linguistic analysis (using turn-taking as an example) and intertextual analysis (drawing attention to genre, which will be a relevant concept during the course) as tools that can enhance critical discourse analytical research. However, it seems that Fairclough (2001: vii) shares the problem-oriented approach to CDA when he speaks about the nature of unequal power relations, which is a theme that seems to surface often in CDA studies. Furthermore, Fairclough (2001: ix) mentions that CDA has been used in a wide range of research fields, of which Gender Studies is likely the closest field to what the present study seeks to accomplish. To him, CDA is "a resource in social and political struggles for equality and justice" (Fairclough 2001: x) – a view that Fairclough (2001: 3) further elaborates on by saying he wants to help people "-- to see the extent to which their language does rest upon common-sense assumptions, and the ways in which these common-sense assumptions can be ideologically shaped by relations of power."

CDA is often multidisciplinary, with theories and methods being chosen to match phenomena research is trying to explain. According to Wodak and Meyer (2001: 23), CDA is "-- a cluster of approaches with a similar theoretical base and similar research questions --". As seen in Wodak and Meyer (2001: 14-29), there are multiple approaches to analysis and data collection. Given how varied the field of critical discourse analysis is, this can be problematic from the point of view of making a well-grounded analysis. The plethora of options available to a scholar further emphasizes the need to be explicit about the theories and views one utilizes when performing CDA, which is also seems to be something Fairclough (1995: 20) when he speaks about consolidating the theoretical and methodological background of CDA . Indeed, it is somewhat hard to come up with a generic CDA method, but Wodak and Meyer (2001: 25) generalize that many CDA studies deal with only small corpora which are usually regarded as being typical of certain discourses, which is also how we will view many video gaming examples in the present study. Apart from textual intervention, this course will not cover any specific analytical approaches beyond the basic principles and presuppositions of CDA, considering that the course is intended for

upper secondary education students who are interested in the themes of the course but likely not versed even in the ground level assumptions of CDA theories.

Concerning the need for feminist critical discourse analysis, Lazar (2005: 2-4) argues for indicating when one is explicitly using a feminist approach in critical discourse analysis. She notes that CDA is already known for taking a political stance and being concerned with social inequality. In addition, Lazar (ibid.) mentions that CDA has a basis in feminist approaches in women's studies. Therefore, one might be somewhat disinclined to separate feminist CDA from CDA in general and many feminists, in fact, do not make the distinction. However, Lazar (ibid.) provides three reasons for identifying feminist CDA as a separate approach. Lazar (2005: 2-3) starts by claiming that "studies in CDA with a gender focus mostly adopt a critical feminist view of gender relations, motivated by the need to change the existing conditions of these relations--". In addition, Lazar points out that some feminists feel reserved about CDA because its founders and dominant figures are straight white men who have failed to give credit to feminists by not citing their work. Her stance, however, is not concerned with the social identities of the men in question. Rather, she is keen to point out that most feminist research in CDA is actually performed by a diverse range of women from various geographical locations, not all of whom are white and heterosexual. She argues for the necessity of analyzing the nature of gender as an ever-present category in most social practices, noting that the subject is sometimes very subtle and evasive while being oppressive at the same time. To reiterate, it seems to me that her second argument for a feminist CDA is calling for a consensus on how CDA should address social issues from a feminist perspective. Furthermore, Lazar's third reason for naming feminist CDA explicitly is to promote visibility within CDA, which in itself has become a prominent field with its own conventions. These reasons have influenced my decision to use feminist CDA as the defining point of view during the course. Moreover, I believe the course serves a feminist agenda and takes a pointedly feminist stance on the issues it explores through CDA.

It is, indeed, fair to point out that critical discourse analysis is already concerned with

similar issues. For example, Wodak and Meyer (2001: 2) speak about the relation between language and power being relevant in CDA. According to them, CDA is concerned with analyzing both subtle and obvious structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as they manifest in language. Simply recognizing the relationships is not enough, of course. Wodak and Meyer (ibid.) stress the point that one must remain critical and attempt to make visible how things are interconnected. Thus, instead of saying *this seems unfair*, it is necessary to define why something is unfair and how the unequal power relation operates. Taking a similar tone, Litosseliti and Sunderland (2002) speak about gender differences, stating that it is not productive to study them unless the purpose is to challenge existing givens. These themes match the aims of the course, promoting awareness and critical thinking in the students who take it. What makes feminist critical discourse analysis particularly suitable for this course, however, is that CDA alone is indeed too broad a field. While both CDA and feminist CDA take a political stance, CDA is interested in a much broader range of social issues (e.g. ethnicity) as seen in Wodak and Meyer (2001) than feminist critical discourse analysis as Lazar (2005) defines it. For a course which is mostly interested in how women are represented in video games and gaming media, feminist CDA is an excellent perspective to utilize. As seen in the previous chapter, women's voices are not represented very well in games and often female video game characters are designed by men for male audiences, although there has been a lot of recent awareness-raising discussion about women as gamers and video game characters. For example, *Polygon* (2015) examines women written by men in video games. While the article recognizes that men can put a lot of effort in creating believable women in video games, it remains a little skeptical about how men can separate themselves for their personal experiences. In addition, the article states that only about 22% of the people working in video gaming industry are women (consider structural relationships of dominance mentioned above), which could be one reason why games focus on men at the expense of women (video game writers write from their personal experience and they are mostly men). *Polygon* (ibid.) is not alone with its concerns. *Rock, Paper, Shotgun* (2015) interviewed Larian Studios, a Belgian company, and found out that their team of writers for *Divinity: Original Sin* consisted

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of one woman and one man – a solution that they were reportedly very happy with because it led to more diverse dialogue (as opposed to entirely male-focused dialogue). I am not claiming that men cannot write convincing characters who are women, but that men often lack the necessary experience to do women justice. While *Polygon*'s article (2015) is also a fine example of awareness-raising discussion, there are other contemporary sources to illustrate that the representation of women in video games has gained increased media attention. One could, for example, look at *Bikini Armor Battle Damage* (2015a), *Fat, Ugly or Slutty* (2015), *Feminist Frequency* (2015a) and *Jimquisition* (2015). These could also be the kind of sources men need to study in order to understand how to represent women in video games.

Critical bias in research is also a source of criticism against CDA. However, both Wodak and Meyer (2001) and Lazar (2005) argue in favor of taking a critical stance in scholarship. Van Dijk (2001: 96) further elaborates that bias does not make critical scholarship futile. In fact, he stresses that critical research must often be excellent to be accepted at all. Furthermore, he argues that attacking critical scholarship can be tied to mechanisms of domination as an attempt to marginalize and problematize dissent. As for feminist CDA specifically, its most important task is to critique discourses which maintain a patriarchal social order – in other words, "relations of power that systematically privilege men as a social group and disadvantage, exclude and disempower women as a social group" (Lazar 2005: 5). Indeed, Lazar (2005: 6) challenges the notion of scientific neutrality, stating that it fails to recognize that all knowledge is socially and historically constructed and based on a system of values. In addition, she elaborates that relations of power and dominance can be discursively resisted and counter-resisted in what she calls "a dynamic struggle over securing and challenging the interests at stake" (Lazar 2005: 10). Wodak and Meyer (2001: 3) make a similar observation, stating that dominant structures stabilize conventions and naturalize them. In the context of video gaming, for example, this could be how women are represented as playable/non-playable characters. In these representations, women are usually defined by their sexuality, availability and/or appearance. Indeed, women's representation in video games is a complex and

problematic issue, even though genre-savvy people would be quick to claim that women are being represented *as they are supposed to be* (according to the conventions of the genre), as seen in almost every previous incarnation of the games they have played.

In the context of CDA, discourse is likewise seen as something that is historically produced and interpreted and thus language use is always situated in time and space (Wodak and Meyer 2001). Moreover, Wodak and Meyer (2001) also explore possibilities of resistance to unequal power relationships that appear as social conventions, which are similar to how Litosseliti and Sunderland (2002) view existing givens and how Lazar (2005) inspects gender from a feminist perspective. Therefore it can be said that the course's background borrows a feminist perspective and focus from Lazar while adhering to the larger framework of CDA and, in turn, many of the practices, conventions and presuppositions made by DA in general; particularly the notion of language as social activity, and a socio-constructivist view on how language operates. In addition, such bias is justified given how women are represented in video games and how the existing norms favor unequal power relationships that disempower women (see section 2.2).

Thus far, we have established that feminist critical discourse analysis is a suitable method for the course because its focus is clearly in line with the course's subject (gender and representation in video games) and aims (providing students with tools for critical thinking and meaningful discussion). Furthermore, it is important to recognize that both CDA (Wodak and Meyer, 2001) and feminist CDA (Lazar 2005) exist to both change the social status quo and to demystify and deconstruct unequal social practices, making room for critical discussion that is not obstructed by taking existing givens for granted. When speaking about the goals of feminist critical discourse analysis, Lazar (2005: 6) mentions social transformation and emancipation. Considering that gender discussion is alive and well in gaming media, there is a pointed need for critical thinking skills and analytical tools suited for discussing the subject. Indeed, an optimistic view might suggest that given enough education to both

consumers and game developers (considering how some students taking this course might very well design their own games in the future), video games might change as a genre to be more welcoming to female audiences, also catering to women as they now cater to men. Although feminist CDA – quite understandably – seeks to achieve emancipation from women's perspective, Lazar (2005: 10) also points out that women themselves are a heterogeneous group. Indeed, the issue of gender itself is not simple. To Lazar (ibid.), gender overlaps with other relations of power based on race, social class, sexual orientation, age, culture and geography. These issues, however, are best explored in detail in the following section dedicated to the definition of gender.

3.3 Gender

For the purposes of this course, gender is defined from the perspective of feminist critical discourse analysis. To start off, it is interesting to note that one's sex does not necessarily correlate stereotypically with one's gender the way a casual onlooker might assume. Indeed, Talbot (2010: 12) calls gender a psycho-social construct rather than associating gender with biological factors. She describes gender as a continuum, insisting that it should not be viewed as a binary system where one either is a man or a woman, masculine or feminine. In addition, it is interesting to note that Talbot (2010: 13) also considers sex – that is, biological sex – a continuum as well. She notes that biological sex is seen as binary only because the distinction is medically enforced and the exceptions are not spoken about. Considering the issues of biological sex and gender is only relevant here from the point of view that Talbot (2010) does not consider biology a severely restricting factor in how one behaves and expresses one's gender identity.

It is, however, not enough to be aware of the fact that gender is essentially a social construct. Litosseliti and Sunderland (2002: 5-6) emphasize that people are not simply socialized into a gender – or at the very least they wish to question the concept. Indeed, what is a gender? A social sex? Litosseliti and Sunderland (ibid.) argue for

recognizing agency and diversity in people's constructions of gender. That is to say, gender is not the same everywhere: it is not a monolithic construct of masculinity that is true for everyone everywhere regardless of time or space, for example. Instead, Litosseliti and Sunderland (ibid.) believe that *language shapes gender*. This view is supported by Sunderland's (2004: 14-17) later findings, where she describes the variation of gender and sex (as opposed to viewing them as binary absolutes). Moreover, Sunderland criticizes the way people use language when speaking about women, who are made invisible by the English generic *man* or *he*, to provide a concrete example. Similarly, using a man as the default/only player character makes the possibility of a woman as a gamer a lot less salient, if not altogether invisible. One is reminded of how *Mass Effect 3* was marketed, with Shepard (the game's protagonist) often being portrayed as a man in the advertisements although the choice is entirely up to the player (I will return to this example in section 5.3.1). Thus it is reasonable to say that gender is not only a varied concept, but also a site for social struggle – a view that is suitable for further critical discourse analytical study. This view is also expressed by Litosseliti and Sunderland (2002: 6), who emphasize that it is important to remember that what it means to be a woman or a man is not same for everyone everywhere.

If gender is a social construct, something that people do in spoken or written discourse (Sunderland, 2004: 17), what is there to stop people being whatever they want? There is, for example, a Tumblr blog that posts daily gender definitions (today's gender: an incomplete MA thesis). While the blog itself would deserve further description and analysis, what I take from the blog's message is that the whole concept of gender is altogether arbitrary. So why is there a struggle in the first place? Both Talbot (2010: 11) and Sunderland (2004: 17) speak about transgressions. If gender is an ongoing performance, there are certain social rules and conventions that depend on where one is situated in time and space. Understandably, breaking these prescriptive norms about how men and women should be and what a gender is can lead to consequences. This goes all the way back to the definition of discourse by Pietikäinen and Mäntynen (2009) used in the present study: discourses do not exist in

a vacuum. For instance, Fairclough (1995: 2) argues that every new text is influenced by other texts that have been produced before it. Thus what it meant to be a man in 1990s still influences how men are viewed in early 2000s. Similarly, an expression like *you hit like a girl* still feels associated with weakness even though there are popular scientific studies showing that professional female boxers/martial artists pack quite a punch – as such, the difference in how good a punch one throws is based on training rather than biological gender. However, even if *you hit like a girl* became a compliment in common parlance, it would still have the history of being used as an insult. Issues related to gender are similar: what it means to be a man or a woman is shaped by history. Even if common beliefs and ideologies change with time, the emancipatory goals of feminist critical discourse analysis will not be realized without considerable struggle and thorough deconstruction of gender.

While Talbot (2010), Sunderland (2004) and Litosseliti and Sunderland (2002) seem to approach gender from the perspective of biological men and women who have a wide range of resources for expressing their gender, I am further intrigued by the prospective of how transgendered people feel about the difference of sex and gender. From the above perspective, it could be said that a man can have a thoroughly feminine identity and identify with the opposite gender – if there is such a thing (as in, can genders even be considered opposites?). Does that, however, address how transgendered people feel about their gender identity? How does surgery affect the definition of one's biological gender? Furthermore, can one be considered a woman, identify with the gender and still be biologically male (which is possible in some states in the United States of America). Unfortunately, these questions are not exactly relevant for the purposes of the course, but they clearly illustrate that gender is, indeed, not an issue that is easy to tackle from one or two viewpoints.

Since the course is aimed at students who may not have considered the prospect of gender as a performance, it is also relevant to consider how this course views gender differences. Especially Sunderland (2004: 16) seems amused by the fact that undergraduate students of linguistics seem especially prone to stubbornly looking for

gender differences where none exist – and ignoring them where they do exist. She views gender as a fluid performance that should not be mapped onto sex (citing an unfortunate saying *the two genders* – which, of course, implies that there are only men and women and all the men and all the women are the same based on their gender). If Sunderland (ibid.) finds that undergraduate students are prone to taking such unhelpful views, the same might be true for upper secondary education students as well. From that perspective, it is understandable that the course should address gender issues, helping students to understand the inherent potential for diversity and variation in how gender is expressed. After taking the course, students should be able to see how differences in communication and expressions are not necessarily tied to gender – and even specific, highly gendered expressions can be used by pretty much everyone, although the potential for transgressions still exists. It is, in fact, the potential for transgressions that makes speaking about gender differences relevant at all: existing notions of gender and how gender can be expressed can be severely limiting in what language people can use, as Sunderland (ibid.) notes, although she is specifically speaking about *women's access to important linguistic resources and possibilities of expression*. Furthermore, Sunderland (2004: 14) is eager to point out that tendencies and specific differences in language use are more likely tied to local communities of practice rather than gender differences: how women behave in Finland in 2014 is likely very different from how women behave in Japan and the differences are likely to get more diverse as we get more specific. For example, what is acceptable for a woman to say during a lecture in the University of Jyväskylä may be different from what she can say in a local bar after the lecture – and the difference may not be tied to gender at all, although a lecturer could conceivably offer more room for men than women (e.g. by overlooking certain expressions or allocating more turns). Similarly, we could consider what a 16-year-old mother can say in Finland in 2014 and how it is different from possibilities available to a 36-year-old woman who does not have any children. Sunderland (2004: 188-190) points out that the concept of gender as a performance challenges common notions of what it means to be a man or a woman (or to exist outside those categories). However, she makes a distinction between "gender as 'men' and 'women'" and "gender as discourse *about* men and

women" (Sunderland, 2004: 189; emphasis original). In other words, there is a difference between what men and women actually are and how men and women are constructed/described through the use of language. Since people still use language to describe men and women, she argues, one ought to pay attention to how language is used on a political level. In addition, she makes a bout about there being situations when it is beneficial "-- to look differentially *inter alia* at the language used by, and discourse available to, women and men --" (Sunderland, 2004: 190; emphasis original). This seems to echo the notion of addressing gender differences to challenge *existing givens* when they produce unequal power relations, as seen in Litosseliti and Sunderland (2002).

3.4 Identity

Identity, as the concept is used in the present study, is closely tied to representation. Indeed, Pietikäinen and Mäntynen (2009: 63-64) explain how both representation and identity are constructed by language and other semiotic systems, which is a perspective taken mainly by discourse analysis. Thus, while Finnish upper secondary education students have likely been introduced to the concept of identity from a psychological point of view, they might not be aware how discourse analysis views the concept. In fact, students may very well consider identities something fixed and permanent, although many would likely consider that their identity as upper secondary education students is liable to change once they graduate. Of course, having attended to upper secondary education is likely something that stays with a person and how they construct their identity.

So what is identity? From the perspective of discourse analysis, as described by Pietikäinen and Mäntynen (2009: 63-64), identity is constructed by language and other semiotic systems. It is dynamic and constructed through multiple sources. For instance, a woman might define her identity based on sources such as her position in her job, how rooted she is in her cultural community (which can be expressed by the

language variant she chooses to speak, such as Flemish), her hobbies (gaming), her sexuality and her religion. As such, the ways in which women are represented in the media associated with their hobbies, might have an effect on how (and if) a particular woman perceives herself as a gamer. She might, for example, feel pressure to succeed and prove her dedicated attitude because women are taken lightly as gamers. Similarly, she might still hear discourses that are opposed to women as gamers – both within the gaming communities she is a part of and outside them. Notice how these factors might resemble Discourses as they are introduced by Gee (2015: 107) in section 3.1. The woman above could invoke the Discourses of gamer, a Flemish person or a Belgian, for instance. Once more, Gee's (2015: 6) definition of Discourses ("ways to enact and recognize socially meaningful identities"), and thus identity, is multimodal: to be a Flemish Belgian, you probably have to speak Dutch and come from Flanders as well, potentially implying a lot of knowledge you need in order to enact the identity effectively.

Pietikäinen and Mäntynen (2009: 63-64) additionally describe the role of language in constructing identities, which can be expressed, described and negotiated through language. According to them, discourses build and challenge identities. Gaming, to provide a concrete example, could be seen as an appropriate or inappropriate activity for a woman depending on the discourses in use. Furthermore, Pietikäinen and Mäntynen define identity as something that is based on one's subjective history and experiences, which is formed in one's social framework. It would, of course, be quite difficult to construct an identity based on standards that are not even known to one. Similarly, a high amount of resistance to some identities could have an effect on how one performs one's identity. To go back to the example above, a woman who is exposed to positive and negative representations of women as gamers might perform her identity differently depending on her expectations and on which representation is more dominant in the communities that she participates to. For instance, when faced with gender issues (e.g. discrimination, harassment) in gaming, she might choose to remain silent about her gender, and define herself solely as a genderless gamer, choosing not to open herself up to critical voices. Naturally, she might as well choose

to openly display her gender and retaliate against the opinion that women cannot be gamers. Or she might choose to disassociate herself from the hobby completely, not wanting the tag (or stigma) of *female gamer* to influence her identity.

To further complicate things, Pietikäinen and Mäntynen (2009: 64-65) consider that people have more than one identity at once. Indeed, people have multiple competing identities that depend on context, from the very basic layers of interaction to the larger context of the society the individual is a part of. The woman from the above example could identify herself as Belgian or Flemish, a gamer, linguist, technical writer, nerd, feminist, agnostic or anything else, depending on the context and the people she finds herself talking to. In addition, identities are constantly changing and being challenged. While the woman might identify as Flemish, for instance, her identity as a Flemish person could be questioned by other people or by the dominant discourses in the society she lives in (i.e. *you have to speak this language this well to be considered a member of this language group* or *your family must have lived here longer than we bother to count for you to identify with our cultural heritage*). Pietikäinen and Mäntynen (ibid.) offer an example where a young, short-haired girl is being addressed as a boy due to her appearance. Likewise, the default gamer is often expected to be a male – a fact that can benefit women, but also challenge how they view themselves as gamers. As Pietikäinen and Mäntynen (ibid.) point out, an identity can be challenged accidentally, such in the above example with the little girl. A chat message like *what's up, mate?* could have a similar effect to a woman in a game where her sex/gender is not apparent to the fellow players.

However, we cannot take constructing identities, especially gender identities, for granted. While it is possible to speak about the intentions people have when choosing certain expressions, Sunderland (2004: 169-173) argues that it is rather difficult to analyze intention, especially since perceived intention is not the same thing as actual intention. We could, for example, watch a let's play YouTube video and think that the maker of the video is trying to be funny when they are actually being serious. Moreover, Sunderland (ibid.) identifies some problems when theorizing gender

identities. Firstly, she is concerned about recognising when gender is being constructed and whether it is indeed gender that is being constructed, instead of ethnicity, sexuality or some other identity. Secondly, she asks whether individuals are able to construct their own gender identity in their own language use, or whether identity construction must always occur with negotiation. Thirdly, she is curious about what people are constructing themselves and others as, and how it is possible to know anything about their intentions. And indeed, is it sensible to talk about intentionality in construction? How are specific discourses related to construction of gender? To summarize Sunderland's (ibid.) long answer, researchers have access to certain warrants for gender, which are then used to justify how data is being interpreted by the researcher. For example, when deciding whether gender is relevant, a researcher can draw on quantitative or general patterns, rely on those patterns indirectly, study participants' orientations or solicited interpretations (made available by interviews or questionnaires), use their own theoretical positions (such as CDA theory), draw on their intuition, or pay attention to the sex/gender of the participants.

However, the above warrants relate mainly to gender, as construction is a whole other matter. Sunderland (2004: 176-177) considers both self-construction and negotiating construction in interaction. She claims that while one can make a claim about one constructing an identity in one's own speech or writing, it is impossible to argue that s/he is also constructing herself/himself as a person. While it is possible that using certain terms to describe oneself can affect the inner workings of a person, Sunderland (2004: 176) states that we cannot know it for sure. How people perform identities, however, is something that can be observed. Moreover, Sunderland (ibid.) speaks about first impressions and how it is possible to perform one's identity in a certain way for a while, but she suspects that the performed identity will not hold for long. Thus, she argues, reconstructions of one's identity may lose impact with time. A person could present themselves as a professional gamer, but that impression would soon fade if they had no skill to match their claims. Furthermore, a professional gamer could try to appear extremely serious about gaming, but that impression might change

if they end up goofing around in live broadcasts because they happen to enjoy what they are doing.

Sunderland (2004: 176-177) also notes that one can certainly attempt almost any sort of identity construction, but its success depends on many factors. For example, the success may depend on how valued the identity construction is by other participants. In most gaming communities, trying to construct yourself as a hardcore gamer of *Candy Crush Saga* would be met with resistance because *Candy Crush Saga* is not necessarily a game that some people associate with high skill requirements. If you played a strategy game or a first person shooter, however, things might be different. When considering negotiating construction in interaction, Sunderland (2004: 177-184) points out that gender identities can be constructed and contested in interaction. Moreover, it is possible to describe people who are present in any given conversation. For instance, two men could talk about what *the average gamer girl* is like. Any women present in the conversation or overhearing could either contest or resist the identity being constructed, however. That is also why negative representation of women does not necessarily lead to women having negative identities as gamers. Furthermore, Sunderland (ibid.) found out that while gender may be present in many interactions, it is not always salient. That being the case, it can be hard to find evidence showing that construction of a gender identity is ongoing. In addition, Sunderland (2004: 184) argues for recognizing more than just spoken and written interaction as potential sites where gender identities can be constructed and negotiated, but that will be discussed in more detail below in section 3.6 on multimodality. In brief, however, it is possible to note the salience of gender based on some linguistic or semiotic cues. For example, a character concept could be based on a stereotype about gender (behavior, speech, appearance) or a gamer's gender could be talked about (and thus made relevant) in explicit terms.

Finally, it is important to note that constructing identities is restricted by various constraints. Sunderland (2004: 187-188) explains the view of CDA, according to which discourses are seen as shaping material conditions and structures, which shape

discourse in turn. Thus, she notes, we can construe ("represent, imagine") social world via text in any way we desire, but whether that representation takes root and actually changes how the social world is constructed depends on what the social world is like and who is construing it. That being the case, a woman might not be given the credibility she deserves to construct her identity as a serious gamer based on her gender alone. Likewise, people who enjoy games casually might not be given credit for their opinions or taken seriously by people who think gaming is extremely serious and vice versa.

3.5 Representation

Pietikäinen and Mäntynen (2009: 54) point out that discourses always present information from a certain perspective. They compare the effect to inspecting a warehouse with a flashlight; the light can illuminate only so many things. While this is an obvious limitation of communication (it is simply not feasible to consider everything in most cases), it is also a source of considerable discursive power. Who gets to speak, who is not heard, how are people described and who gets to describe them are all relevant questions. In the context of gaming, it is relevant to consider both women as gamers and as video game characters. Are women dubbed casuals who are mostly interested in games like *Candy Crush*? If so, who gets to define women as gamers? Furthermore, what is a casual game? Are games equal or do some games or skills have special value? Are some representations of women as video game characters damaging? Why? To whom? These all are questions that can be explored in depth when following gaming media and related discussions.

Pietikäinen and Mäntynen (2009: 55) define representation a means of constructing a certain view of a topic and agents who are related to it. As mentioned above, it is crucial to notice the relationships between the topic and the agents tied to it. One powerful example is how certain discourses consider women a threat to gaming. In this context, gaming could mean games that men have traditionally enjoyed –

especially games with glaring representation issues that would not necessarily cater to female audiences. It is relevant considering that game developers have long wondered how to make their games appealing to women as well and there is a strong demand for more equal representation for women in games, perhaps partially explaining the success of games like *Gone Home*. According to *USgamer* (2015), *Gone Home*, a game with a woman protagonist that explores contemporary issues like sexual orientation, sold quite well. Similarly, *Polygon* (2015) praised Rhianna Pratchett's depiction of Lara Croft in *Tomb Raider*, which was released in 2014. However, if women are, in certain circles, spoken of in a demeaning manner (*casuals with no skill*, for example), it is easy to see why the uninformed male gamer might be concerned about appealing to women meaning making his games too easy, the implied logic being that *women are casual gamers and games that cater to women are automatically simple, casual and beneath a true hardcore male gamer's attention*. Or he might worry that the games he likes to play will disappear to be replaced exclusively by titles that feature *Barbie* – completely ignoring the diverse range of games women play. This kind of concern does little good to women, however, considering how many women are actually extremely skilled and dedicated gamers and how many men are actually pretty casual in their gaming tastes. As we have seen, the division between casual and hardcore players is another problematic area, but it is hardly the main focus of the course beyond noting that representing women only as casual gamers with no interest in *serious* gaming is a dire mistake at best.

Litosseliti and Sunderland (2002: 4-5) describe some forms of language use that can be particularly harmful to the representation of women. Firstly, there are grammatical forms that render women invisible. One example would be when a man says that women are a threat to *our games*. In this case, *our* stands for men only and women are excluded. A clearer example would be when *gamer* is used to refer to men (or is assumed to be a man by default), ignoring all the women who also play games. The above examples make it clear how language can be used to represent – or conceal – groups of people (e.g. *gamers are predominantly men*). These forms are not quite on par with the English generic *he* or *man* as seen in Litosseliti and Sunderland (ibid.),

but rendering women invisible or even excluding them from superficially neutral terms is definitely problematic. Secondly, Litosseliti and Sunderland (ibid.) mention words representing women in a trivial or demeaning manner. Thirdly, they make a note of lexical items aimed at degrading women. The latter two, in a gaming context, often conform to forms one would expect of English language. For example, calling women names and using slurs is regrettably fairly common. Likewise, killing off female characters in order to further the male protagonist's story is relatively common – a literary device that does not only exist in video games and which often trivializes the existence of women in the story, as seen in *Feminist Frequency* (2015b). However, it is important to remember that representation in games is effectively multimodal (see chapter 3.6). Regardless, it can be noted here that there are some visual and narrative representations that would also qualify for these categories: either making women invisible in the game world or representing them in a demeaning or even degrading manner.

Furthermore, it is relevant to consider the consequences and restrictions of representation, as seen in Pietikäinen and Mäntynen (2009: 56). In the context of gaming, one easily identified consequence could be whether representation in gaming caters to women – and how women might see themselves reflected in video games and related media. Usually, the reflection is found wanting. Pietikäinen and Mäntynen (ibid.) also consider it important to inspect who is able to describe something and in which context it is possible for them to do so. In the case of above representations, it is not surprising that women may find it difficult to be taken seriously as gamers. As such, they may find it hard to speak as serious gamers (or to be taken seriously when they do). In addition, women might feel that they have to work twice as hard to be taken seriously: any mistakes done are quickly attributed to gender, whereas mistakes made by men are more easily forgiven (or at least not attributed to their individual skills). Indeed, Pietikäinen and Mäntynen (2009: 57-58) remind that all discourses are not equal. Pietikäinen and Mäntynen (ibid.) are also conscious about how a reader's resources shapes how she or he interprets what s/he sees, reads or hears. Given how women are represented in games and as gamers, I would not be

surprised if the average male gamer simply lacked the resources to interpret a mistake made by a woman as something that has nothing to do with her gender. Similarly, a skilled woman might think that she has triumphed over *restrictions placed by gender* whereas her less skilled friends might simply be bad because they are *normal girls* or *unskilled/casual boys* (and so forth). Fortunately women are speaking out and there is certainly an effort to change how women are viewed as gamers. The task would not be nearly so demanding if the previous representations of women were not so widely spread and rooted in gaming culture, which is also an issue that Pietikäinen and Mäntynen (2009: 59) describe when speaking about the dynamic hierarchy of discourses. However, as seen in Fairclough (2001: 57), dominant discourses (for example about women as gamers) do not stay in power automatically: they can be contested and fall out of fashion. Discourse is inherently linked to ideology and different ideologies and discourses compete for the spotlight. Seen like this, each discourse takes a perspective that is favorable to the ideology it supports, either recycling or challenging ideologies with linguistic resources. Even as we seek to challenge women's representation in games, the old, less beneficial representations of women are still being recycled and reproduced by other people who might, for example, prefer the traditional space women have occupied both as gamers and as video game characters. It is not surprising, then, that representation is a crucial term when inspecting discursive power and unequal power relations.

3.6 Multimodality

In section 3.4 about identity, Sunderland (2004) is mostly speaking about features of language that can be found in written or spoken text. Sunderland (2004: 185) states, however, that a critical discourse analytical approach, drawing on social constructionism, can consider things beyond written and spoken text. Indeed, according to her definition: "-- discourse is the semiotic means by which ideology is constructed and maintained, and pervades all semiotic forms – talk, writing, social actions and institutional arrangements" (Sunderland 2004: 185).

Multimodality, as introduced by Ventola, Cassily and Kaltenbacher (2004), is technically included in how this course understands text – especially since the concept of multimodality may well help students to understand video game discourses and related media discourses better. Ventola et al. (2004: 1) define multimodality as combinations of writing, speaking, visualization, sound, music and so forth. For example, multimodal media could consist of writing and music – a heartfelt poem read to a heavy metal soundtrack would sound very different in comparison to the same poem read with soothing background music. Ventola et al. (ibid.) feel that texts where considering language alone is enough for analysis are becoming rare. In the above example, the heavy metal soundtrack would definitely have an impact on how the poem is received by any audience. Video games are very much similar. I would even go as far as to argue that it would be remarkably futile to analyze gender and representation in video games without considering multimodal resources. Indeed, video games are multimodal by their very definition, a view that is also endorsed by Gee (2015: 56). Even text-based Multi User Dungeons have access to fonts (and color) and they often use individual symbols to form images rather than writing (e.g. a map where w stands for an area covered in water). Of course, video games have evolved way beyond text-based graphics and the pursuit of photorealism in graphics practically demands attention when analyzing video game discourses. Ventola et al. (2004: 1) make a similar observation, suggesting that the relevance of multimodality is partly due to the increased level of technology we possess – although their book considers other forms of multimodality as well, such as gestures (which are not, by any stretch of imagination, a modern invention).

Furthermore, Lim Fei (2004: 51) agrees that language is not enough to account for how meaning is made. What is interesting, however, is that he problematizes the concept of semiotic resources and asks whether it is reasonable to infer any meaning from multimodal resources, such as images. Lim Fei (2004: 57) agrees that there is a degree of difference on how arbitrary written text and signs like images are considered. However, he argues for focusing more on how a sign can interpreted

rather than attempting to understand what a sign was meant to convey. He takes a post-modernistic position, according to which it is possible to analyze what a text "as an artefact of culture" can mean without considering what the author intended. Finally, Lim Fei (2004: 58) addresses the issue of arbitrariness, pointing out that written text can be arbitrary as well. That being the case, I am disinclined to see written text as somehow more secure or clear for analysis. Lim Fei's position on analyzing texts as cultural artifacts is going to be extremely helpful for the course, considering that each student will interpret images and other multimodal resources in text from their individual perspective, which will be taken further during the course by discussing students' observations in small groups. It is likely that one student may see a particular resource as damaging, whereas another student might consider it harmless or amusing in its ridiculousness, which is consistent with how Sunderland (2004) addresses damaging discourses. Indeed, Sunderland (2004: 194) points out that discourses are so diverse that it is hard to see when a particular discourse is damaging to someone. In addition, she believes that damaging discourses can be resisted and laughed at, so *damage* may not be a result of encountering a potentially damaging discourse. Finding damaging discourses is not even remotely as important as being able to talk about discourses and how students perceive them.

3.7 Summary

The course uses discourse analysis as the framework that makes it possible to understand and explain how language and social activity are entwined. It is clear to me, however, that the course also needs to be critical of how language works. Critical discourse analysis would provide an excellent platform for discussing unequal power relationships in video games on its own. Indeed, I believe it would be possible to have a series of courses based on CDA, each taking a more detailed look at different aspects of representation in video games. Sexuality and race are potentially interesting areas for further research and development in this regard. The course places its biggest emphasis on gender issues in video games, however, the representation of women

being its most important focus. Thus, I believe that feminist critical discourse analysis actually suits the course's needs better than critical discourse analysis in general. Feminism is hardly a stranger to issues related to race or sexuality either, making it a reasonably versatile perspective. Indeed, *a queer woman of color* might very well be the most demanding difficulty setting for a gamer to have (see Nakamura, 2012).

One could say that almost every issue discussed in the material package can be seen through the lens of gender and representation. Representation has an effect on how we understand gender. When one is speaking of gender, it is important to remember that gender is not a binary system or automatically linked to biological sex. Similarly, it should be noted that representations are always constructing a limited view of a subject. Who gets to define the view and who are heard are examples of how discursive power works. If *a gamer* means *a straight white boy*, is it all that surprising that anyone who does not fit within that very narrow definition is not taken seriously by those who do? Identity is a concept that interacts very closely with Discourses, gender and representation as they are discussed in the present study. One's sense of identity can be a very subjective experience and it is not always easy to tell what kind of identity a person is constructing. Furthermore, video games are multimodal by nature. In a simple sense, this means that video games interact with players with means other than written and spoken texts. Indeed, video games are often very visual and a surprising amount of effort can be spent in making a game sound just right. More importantly, multimodality is necessary because the representation of women in video games is also multimodal. Here, it becomes increasingly important to look at social arrangements. Understanding multimodality can help students to see how identities are construed and how video games represent gender.

4 Pedagogical Theory and Methodology

This section will detail the theory about learning and teaching that the present course utilizes. To start with, the course uses constructivist theory about learning, which

explains how students learn and how knowledge is (socially) constructed. Since constructivism is a theory of learning that does not automatically translate to a set of pedagogical practices, it is not enough to inform the design of a course. Instead, I will look at compatible approaches to learning and teaching, such as cooperative learning and content and language integrated learning, which will form the core theoretical methodology through which the course is taught. Finally, because the content studied during the course (video game samples, real media coverage and actual textual interventions produced by various people) is mostly authentic or based strongly on authentic materials, I will consider the impact of authentic tasks and materials to learning in order to make the most of them.

4.1 Constructivism

Fosnot (2005: ix) defines constructivism as a theory about knowledge and learning. Indeed, she draws on multidisciplinary understanding about the theory, considering that constructivism is a result of work in psychology, philosophy, science and biology. Thus, constructivism is an answer to the question: "What is knowledge and how can it be acquired?" One might look back at section 3.1 and note that discourse analysis is also tied to constructivism. According to Fosnot's definition (ibid.), knowledge does not exist as objective truths that can be pinpointed or shared. Therefore, it is futile to attempt to transmit knowledge from a teacher to a learner. Instead, each learner must work on their own interpretations of reality. Naturally, as Fosnot (ibid.) notes, constructivism has implications to learning (and teaching): learning is an ongoing struggle of meaning-making, not transmission of knowledge from a teacher to a student. I find that this view places importance on an individual student's work and how she or he processes knowledge, which is a very appropriate point of view considering the aims of this course. Moreover, Fosnot (ibid.) considers it important that students get to discuss their ideas (both to explain and to defend them), which should help them to take their knowledge further than if they simply worked on their ideas alone. A group of students could, for example, discuss their ideas about a

particular piece of gaming discourse to see how they perceive it, perhaps negotiating a meaning they all can subscribe to. Even if the meaning the students negotiate together is not agreed upon by all, they will likely gain awareness about different sorts of interpretations and ways of approaching a problem.

However, von Glasersfeld (2005: 5-6) has a few relevant notes about shared meanings and how knowledge is constructed. Namely, he states that construct of knowledge cannot be shared as such, since everyone has to construct their knowledge on their own, from their perspective – which is never the same as the perspective of someone else, even though two perspectives might be remarkably similar. Indeed, he advocates for using taken-for-shared (no meaning is ever perfectly shared or translated, even though a mutual understanding can be established to an extent) when speaking about shared meanings, which helps to remember that knowledge is subjective – according to a constructivist perspective, at any rate. Von Glasersfeld's (2005: 6) example comes from language: one could learn a particular word and find that people usually interpret it as she or he would want them to, but they could still stumble into a situation where the people hearing the word interpret it differently. Similarly, students might give a particular discourse certain attributes only to find out that some other groups in the class disagree – and they might find out later in life that how they have thought about a particular discourse or discourse in general is no longer sufficient to their needs.

However, constructivism is hardly enough to answer for how teaching should be conducted during the course. Fosnot (2005: 279-280) is keen to remind that constructivism is a theory of learning, not a theory of teaching. While there is talk about pedagogical approaches based on constructivism, Fosnot (ibid.) feels that there is a striking lack of constructivist theories about teaching. According to her, there is no consensus about what should be taught, how teaching should be conducted and how to educate teachers. That perspective will be vital when selecting other theories to support teaching during this course. Basically, the theories and methods should be applicable with the core assumptions of constructivism and produce learning

environments that give students room to pursue knowledge on their own. Furthermore, a themed course likely has problems with negotiating the curriculum with students as well. If I have specific examples in mind in order to facilitate the learning process, how can I let students to find their own examples? I can certainly give students room to bring and consider their own examples (especially since some examples are likely to become old and less relevant with the passing of time), but I feel it is not very practical to make the students to look for everything on their own. That being said, students should be free to choose their approach to a problem and their contributions and ideas should be valued. Constructivism, as a theory about knowledge and learning, will definitely inform my choice on methods, which are explained in sections 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4.

It is, regardless, possible to see how constructivism could be applied in a classroom. For instance, Gould (2005: 99-109) considers how the approach informs teaching and learning in the language arts. In a constructivist classroom, she argues, students have an active role in both constructing their knowledge and choosing topics that engage them. Thus, it is up to the teacher to support students in their search of knowledge, on-demand assistance, or scaffolding, as necessary. Ideally, classroom activities are both challenging and motivating. Furthermore, Gould (ibid.) points out that activities like writing do not need – or in fact, should not be – solitary. By making a student write a piece of text for the teacher alone, Gould (2005: 100) feels that the student misses out on many opportunities to improve one's writing. Indeed, Gould (ibid.) explicitly states that social activities tied to writing can actually improve a student's writing. I believe that the same might be true for understanding discourse as well, further emphasizing the view that discourses can be highly subjective and depend a lot on context and an interpreter's past experiences (see Pietikäinen and Mäntynen, 2009).

Furthermore, Gould (2005: 101-103) considers collaboration, interaction and questioning cornerstones of constructing knowledge. She speaks for a learning environment where students can trust that they are allowed to ask questions. Indeed,

Gould (ibid.) believes that asking questions is an important aspect of learning. Similarly, she considers collaboration and interaction important based on how they allow for exploration of ideas. Recalling the example above, students who negotiate how they see a certain discourse would likely learn from the experience – and thus this course should seek to provide opportunities for discussing discourses and negotiating meanings. Gould (2005: 104:105) goes further into the reasons behind encouraging peer collaboration (as opposed to collaboration between a teacher and a student). At the most basic level, it seems that collaboration can be a means to an end: a student might need help reaching a goal and they ask another student for aid. Furthermore, Gould (ibid.) says that advanced students can help other students to form learning strategies or exploit resources that a student already has but does not fully command. For instance, one student could remember what definitions this course gives to discourse and help another student to use that knowledge to form an argument about a certain text.

Gould (2005: 103-104) also elaborates on what a teacher can do to support her or his students. She mentions scaffolding, defining it as a temporary framework that assists growth and matches a student's needs. Thus, a teacher could assign another student to help a student who needs help or offer help with a tricky term, still leaving most of the meaning-making to the student. Of course, a teacher could give an explicit definition of a term and insist on it being the only true definition, but according to how Fosnot (2005) views knowledge and how von Glasersfeld (2005) describes sharing meanings, there is hardly any guarantee that the teacher could transfer her or his knowledge to the student. Furthermore, Gould (2005: 103-104) considers mini lessons a good way of helping the students along. Indeed, if the students are working on different projects, a teacher led 45-minute-lecture might not serve the needs of the class very well. Instead, Gould (ibid.) feels that short sessions of about seven minutes are adequate for helping the students to grasp essential concepts before letting them to work on the concepts individually or in groups.

4.2 Cooperative Learning

If constructivism is the core theory about knowledge and learning the course utilizes, then cooperative learning is the method through which the course seeks to help the students learn. While cooperative learning is not inherently the same as constructivism, I hope I can demonstrate how cooperative learning as a teaching method is compatible with the theory. Primarily, I hope to argue how the methods used during the present course will help students to construct knowledge cooperatively with other students and the teacher.

According to Jolliffe (2007: 2-3), cooperative learning is basically learning that takes place with one's co-learner, be they students or adults. Jolliffe (ibid.) draws upon Vygotsky's theory about zone of proximal development, which is also featured in Fosnot and Perry (2005: 22-23) when they explain the cornerstones of constructivism. Thus, both constructivism and cooperative learning have similar ideas about how learning happens and why group work is beneficial. In addition, both Gould (2005: 101) and Jolliffe (2007: 2-3) emphasize the need for a safe learning environment where learners feel that their contribution is valued. Looking back at the above section about constructivism, I am reminded how Gould (2005: 101-105) argues for collaboration, interaction and questioning in a constructivist learning style. Indeed, she feels that exploring ideas is vital to how students construct their knowledge – a process that is primarily social and achieved in cooperation with one's co-learners and teacher.

Of course, simply placing students in groups and calling it a day is hardly enough to claim that one is utilizing the cooperative learning method. Both Jolliffe (2007: 3) and Gillies (2007: 4-5) mention individual accountability and positive interdependence as cornerstones of cooperative learning. Interestingly, both Jolliffe (2007: 3) and Gillies (2007: 4) use the phase *sink or swim together* to describe positive interdependence. Arguably, the phrase describes the nature of positive interdependence well: all group members participate to achieve some goal, which cannot be reached unless everyone

contributes. Naturally, positive interdependence is created by teachers and students: a teacher can – and in fact must, according to Gillies (2007: 6) – design tasks that are challenging and open enough to require multiple experts. Tasks that have simple, clear answers or that can be completed by a single person alone are not optimal for cooperative learning. At the same time, students can divide the work in a group equally, giving each other meaningful tasks.

Individual accountability, in turn, means that students must take responsibility for their own work. According to Gillies (2007: 39), positive interdependence can be a source of individual accountability. When a student participates to group work and notices that their participation and effort is valued, they are more likely to contribute to the collective effort, Gillies (ibid.) argues. Moreover, she points out that when individuals realize that they are accountable to their peers, their motivation to perform well increases. In addition, Gillies (ibid.) notes how a teacher can pay a role in establishing individual accountability in students by following their progress and making sure that everyone is contributing. Furthermore, Gillies (2007: 40-41) provides some practical tips for high school level students, who are roughly the equivalent of upper secondary school students that this course is aimed for. She introduces two forms of peer assessment that promote establishing individual accountability: either students can evaluate each other based on their participation (such as the amount of helpful suggestions offered) or they can grade each other based on how well they performed in their designed roles. A teacher, while monitoring students' progress, can likewise interject to offer informal feedback. I will discuss course assessment in section 5.5, but it should be mentioned here that the course will favor informal peer assessment in the form of constructive feedback, about which a teacher will have to discuss with the students.

While both Jolliffe (2007) and Gillies (2007: 4-5) acknowledge the role of interpersonal and small-group skills in cooperative learning, I feel that Gillies (ibid.) bases a little more emphasis on them by introducing them in more detail, hand in hand with the two concepts introduced in the paragraph above. Gillies (ibid.) argues

that students also need to know how to communicate with each other in order to enable expressing ideas and acknowledging others' contributions. Moreover, Gillies (ibid.) lists skills such as taking turns and democratic decision making, which make cooperative learning shine. Jollife (2007: 4) also mentions the importance of achieving a consensus, also listing conflict resolution as one of the essential skills students need in order to engage in cooperative learning meaningfully. More importantly, however, both Gillies (2007: 4-5) and Jolliffe (2007: 8) note that these skills cannot be taken for granted. That is, students need to be explicitly taught how to work in groups effectively. While Gillies (2007) has many useful strategies for teaching essential small group skills, I feel that it might also be possible to take a constructivist approach to the problem. It should be possible to introduce cooperative learning as a concept during the very first lessons given during the course, allowing students to think about what kind of group work is desirable and how they will make the most of the experience. Furthermore, Gillies (2007: 4-5) mentions that promotive interaction should be encouraged: students should actively seek to encourage each other to participate during group activities. Moreover, she points out that students should be reflecting on their roles as members of the group, asking questions like *How are we doing?* and *Is there anything else we should be doing?* I mention these two essential factors last because they are something that (I believe) might not come up in student discussion about effective group work – in that case, a teacher would do well to promote them in their feedback about the students' findings.

As should be apparent by now, a teacher has a very specific role in cooperative learning. According to Jolliffe (2007: 13), the teacher is primarily a co-constructor of knowledge rather than an all-knowing instructor. A teacher's job, then, is active listening and involving students, facilitating their learning process. Once again, what Jolliffe (ibid.) says sounds remarkably similar to how Fosnot (2005: ix) describes a teacher's role in constructivism. Furthermore, Gillies (2007: 9-11) elaborates on the role of a teacher in a classroom that utilizes cooperative learning. According to Gillies (2007: 9), "Teachers play a critical role in establishing cooperative learning pedagogy in their classrooms. Included in this is responsibility for ensuring that groups are well

structured so students will cooperate and promote each other's learning and that the group task is relevant and open and discovery-based, requiring students to dialogue together". Moreover, she also agrees that teachers should be facilitators, coaching their students. Gillies (ibid.) also notes that effective teachers commonly engage students, providing small group instruction and asking questions that require a high level of comprehension. In addition, Gillies (ibid.) promotes the importance of preparation in implementing cooperative learning activities. While these considerations may seem simple on paper, I suspect it is much harder to consistently incorporate them as a part of one's teaching practices. Regardless, when reflecting on a teacher's performance during the course, these could be helpful starting points for reflection and further development.

Finally, it seems relevant to describe the concrete benefits of cooperative learning explicitly. Jolliffe (2007: 6) states that cooperative learning is very heavily researched and the studies she cites show that it improves learning, interpersonal relationships, psychological health and social competence. She further divides these categories into factors like greater productivity, spending more time on task, greater problem-solving, a greater sense of belonging, improved morale, higher self-esteem, increased resilience and ability to cope with adversity and stress and so forth. Jolliffe (2007: 9) points out, however, that cooperative learning cannot be successful without teaching a wide array of required skills and attitudes (see above) to the students – group work alone is not sufficient to ensure success. During this course, we will have some time to dedicate to group work skills, which we will discuss alongside other course content. Even so, most of the cooperative learning skills taught during this course are focused on the early stages of the course in order to ensure that everyone has access to some basic concepts (e.g. how to work efficiently in groups and how to give and take constructive feedback), whereas students' further development will likely happen through actually participating in group tasks. As an added benefit, both Jolliffe (2007) and Gillies (2007) consider cooperative learning highly inclusive: all students, regardless of their ability, can participate in cooperative learning and benefit from it.

In conclusion, it seems that cooperative learning supports a constructivist view on knowledge and learning. Most tasks during the course will be open-ended with no right answers and exploring ideas in small groups is highly recommended. Few people can truly come to understand discourse without becoming aware of its interpretative nature. This is especially true since the course will mostly consider how women are represented in video games – a topic that is highly controversial by nature. I expect students to have varying opinions about the discourses they identify during the course. Indeed, the students might not even necessarily agree on the same discourses, which is actually an expected outcome from a constructivist point of view. Of course, integrating cooperative learning with the course means taking time to practice the required skills. Considering that the course lasts for 19 90-minute-sessions, finding the time to do so should be effortless. That being said, the course will be long enough for the students to get frustrated with continuous cooperative tasks, which I have kept in mind while designing the course materials.

4.3 Content and Language Integrated Learning

According to Dalton-Puffer, Nikula and Smit (2010: 23), Content and Language Integrated Learning (abbreviated as CLIL from here on) is an umbrella term that covers "European models of bilingual education aimed at foreign, second, minority and/or heritage languages". Furthermore, they note that CLIL covers many different learning scenarios (given how far CLIL has spread) and is still under rapid development. Indeed, Dalton-Puffer et al. (2010: 23-24) seem concerned that CLIL is being implemented faster than new theory is being developed.

Dalton-Puffer et al. (2010: 1) describe CLIL as an educational approach that is aimed at students participating in mainstream education, the level of which can range from primary to tertiary. As the name suggests, CLIL promotes integration of language learning by combining it with a subject matter, which takes prominence over what one might consider stereotypical formal language learning (e.g. drilling irregular

verbs in English). Indeed, Coyle, Hood and Marsh (2010: 10) argue that CLIL has several advantages, such as granting learners access to content-specific language, giving them tools to do better in future studies and professional life, and advancing learners' cognitive development. While Dalton-Puffer et al. (2010) mention that the subject which can be taught through a foreign language could be, for example, biology or geography (both curricular subjects in Finnish schools), Jakonen (2014: 59) explicitly states that CLIL combines the teaching of curricular content and language.

Since the representation of women in video games is not what one would expect to encounter in the core curriculum of most Finnish schools, I feel that it is necessary to show how CLIL describes the work students will engage in during this course. Firstly, it could be argued that the Finnish national core curriculum (LOPS 2003, 2014) supports the aims and contents (such as equal rights) of this course. Secondly, while discourse is mainly seen as social activity (e.g. Pietikäinen and Mäntynen, 2009 or Fairclough, 2001), and although discourse analysis is often seen as a multidisciplinary field, we would be approaching the subject through the English language, considering this particular course is designed to be a part of English studies for students who are close to finishing their upper secondary education. Therefore, it is reasonable to ask how what we are doing is CLIL and not formal language teaching one might expect to encounter in a stereotypical English class in Finland.

Dalton-Puffer et al. (2010: 1) find that CLIL has similarities with content-based instruction and immersion education. In fact, this course will be somewhat similar to immersion education because my aim is that everyone participating in the course uses as much target language (here, English) as possible, whereas Jakonen (2014: 60) notes that the amount of foreign language used in a typical CLIL lesson seems to be less than 50% – as far curricular content instruction is concerned, at least. As Jakonen (2014: 59) points out, CLIL languages tend to be lingua francae, which is a classification that would fit English quite easily. Of course, many gaming communities tend to use English as a lingua franca as well, which makes English a very productive language to study from a discourse analytical point of view. Diverse examples of

language in use and different ideologies (concerning race, sexuality, gender and gaming preferences, for example) at play should be abundant. Furthermore, Jakonen (2014: 59-60) explains that CLIL lessons are usually structured as content lessons and that they do not replace formal language lessons, but rather complement them. It would also seem that the difference between CLIL and content-based language instruction is based on which is more important: the language or the content. When speaking about discourse analysis, one might see how this is a difficult question to tackle. However, I feel that this course approaches language as the content: instead of focusing on grammatical forms or drilling irregular vocabulary items, we inspect how language is used to create and challenge representations and the Discourses (and ideologies) that those representations both draw on and constitute. Although students are expected to develop as language learners during this course, formal language learning is not one of the core foci of the course. Coyle et al. (2010: 22-23) offer a model for CLIL where a language teacher takes responsibility for a CLIL module (i.e. this course), which is precisely how this course would operate. According to them, "The module involves authentic content learning and communication through the CLIL language, and is scaffolded through language-teacher input" (Coyle et al., 2010: 22). This is in line with how I see the role of a teacher during the course: a facilitator of communication who has the professional knowledge to offer scaffolding when necessary. Instead of promoting language learning through formal teaching, it is my hope that students can improve their language skills by using English while working with authentic tasks and materials.

As mentioned above, CLIL is a reasonably broad approach. That being the case, many different methods fit under the term. Dalton-Puffer et al. (2010: 2) maintain that the fusion of language and content learning is crucial to CLIL. Therefore, while language learning may not be in the spotlight, it is hardly ignored in CLIL either. Indeed, Dalton-Puffer et al. (ibid.) state that language goals may be high, but they usually remain implicit. From there on, though, they note that CLIL education can be long- or short-term, lasting just a few weeks or even entire school-careers. Naturally, this course would fit somewhere in the middle, assuming that it is taught in its entirety. Of course,

it is entirely possible to take some elements from the course for individual lessons or theme weeks, although this package has not been designed to be taken apart without prior consideration to what students might need to know before engaging in course activities. Furthermore, the intensity of language use can vary as well. Dalton-Puffer et al. (ibid.) mention short term, high-intensity language showers; completing one or more school subjects in a foreign language and other approaches that are somewhere in between. While I would consider this course high-intensity because the aim is to use as much English as possible, I feel that it is possible to use students' L1 (usually Finnish) as a resource for learning, as observed by Jakonen (2014: 60). Similarly, this course would take a little longer than an intense language shower, but it would hardly last over a year. In fact, 19x90 minute lessons, twice a week, would only take about ten weeks to deliver.

If the course does not teach language explicitly, how do the students learn? Dalton-Puffer et al. (2010: 24) base their assumptions on principles of language immersion, considering young people able to acquire language knowledge through incidental learning. Thus, language competence is created through frequent and varied exposure to a second language, which is made available to learners, but not taught explicitly. Furthermore, Dalton-Puffer et al. (ibid.) note that "-- one of the key characteristics of linguistic development within bilingual learning relates to the fact that it implies vehicular use of language as a tool for the gathering and sharing of knowledge: Language as the means of study rather than the object of study." In addition, CLIL (as introduced by Dalton-Puffer et al., ibid.) considers learners as efficient users of language, rather than treating them as deficient novices. This is also my belief. I hope that students are able to use the language skills they have built up by the time they take this course to communicate effectively in the target language. On the other hand, a working grasp of English is mandatory to fully participate in the course, but I believe that the cooperative learning method will help students of all abilities to learn and contribute. Finally, Dalton-Puffer et al (2010: 25) "-- assume that the teaching of content via the L2 is not compatible with a traditionally conceived formal structural language syllabus." That seems a good reason to offer CLIL lessons as something to

support and complement formal language learning instead of attempting to replace traditional English lessons altogether. Dalton-Puffer et al. (ibid.) note, however, that language learning does occur, although they believe that it is mostly incidental in CLIL lessons.

When speaking about content outcomes, Dalton-Puffer (2014:4) notes a concern that CLIL learners might have weaker content knowledge than their peers. However, she has found out that generally CLIL learners have as much content knowledge as their peers who have not participated in CLIL programs. Moreover, Dalton-Puffer (ibid.) seems to support the notion of linguistic problems actually enhancing learning (problems create room for discussion and elaboration, which leads to enhanced learning, basically). As for language skills, Dalton-Puffer (2014: 5) points out results, according to which talented learners will do well in tests whether they participate in CLIL education or not, but CLIL education generally enhances the language skills of the entire group consistently. In Dalton-Puffer (2014), classroom talk in CLIL seems to offer more possibilities for open-ended questions and negotiation of meanings, although she notes that short, simple answers also occur. In her concluding remarks, Dalton-Puffer (2014: 15) states that CLIL lessons are likely to enhance students listening comprehension and vocabulary while offering less chances to practice writing skills or syntax. Indeed, Dalton-Puffer (2014: 11) notes that CLIL students are often listeners, given limited time available during a lesson. I, however, believe that cooperative learning methods can address some of these time management issues. After all, if my goal is to make 20 students to speak during each class, the goal would be considerably easier to accomplish if group tasks are introduced. It is, therefore, my hope that this course will go beyond increasing students' subject knowledge, subject-specific vocabulary and listening comprehension skills. I believe that frequent use of cooperative tasks allows students to improve their communication and group work skills in addition to the skills listed above, leading to better rounded language competence.

Finally, Dalton-Puffer (2014: 15) argues for stating language aims explicitly when

using CLIL as a teaching method. During this course, the following goals, as they are presented in Dalton-Puffer (2014: 3), are of paramount importance:

1. Developing intercultural communication skills (i.e. being able to discuss representations of women as cultural constructs).

2. Providing opportunities to study content through different perspectives (i.e. hopefully understanding that people experience discourses differently).

3. Accessing subject-specific target language terminology (i.e. DA and gaming terminology, for instance).

4. Improving overall target language competence (by using the target language with authentic tasks).

5. Developing oral communication skills (e.g. through group discussions, negotiation of meaning).

6. Diversifying methods and forms of classroom practice (e.g. by employing different tasks and assignments to reach different learning styles, CLIL itself being something new or different most likely).

7. Increasing learner motivation (e.g. through new approaches and addressing contemporary cultural issues).

As mentioned above, I believe that the combination of CLIL and cooperative learning methods will allow students to work together with authentic materials, which hopefully allows them to reach the learning goals (see section 5.5) of this course.

4.4 Authentic Materials

Understanding authenticity and the use of authentic materials in English as a second language education is made relevant by the frequent use of course materials that I would deem authentic. For example, we will be using screenshots and video footage from commercially available games. Similarly, we will inspect authentic texts made by gamers who are taking part in the discussion about the representation of women in games. In addition to providing a definition for what authentic means for this course,

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it is also important to consider the pedagogical theory behind the use of authentic materials in classroom teaching to make the most of the authentic materials used during the course.

According to Autio (2012: 8), the role of authenticity in foreign language education has been under serious debate. She mentions concerns like the loss of authenticity when authentic materials are being inspected in a classroom environment, which could be considered a very inauthentic setting by default (as opposed to naturally occurring communication, which does not follow a scripted A-B sheet, for instance). Similarly, Autio (2012: 8-9) mentions that authentic materials can easily be too challenging, given that they are often produced by a native speaker for a real audience. That is, of course, only a single and perhaps outdated definition for authentic materials. Dictating that authentic materials can only be produced by native speakers of a language is highly problematic considering the role of English as a lingua franca in many gaming communities. Indeed, what is authentic is – in itself – subject to debate. Recently, though, there has been a shift towards understanding authenticity through learner experience. It is interesting to note that both Autio (2012: 8) and Kaikkonen (2004: 173) approach authenticity by the word's Greek origins, and they seem to arrive to a fairly similar conclusion: authenticity manifests in how genuine the learning process feels to the leaner, emphasizing their own contribution to their own learning. This view on authenticity seems compatible with a constructivist view on learning, especially since it promotes the role of the learner and the learner's individual experiences. In fact, Kaikkonen (2004: 173) considers that the most authentic texts to learners are the ones that learners themselves get to produce or find.

Autio (2012: 13) suggests that authenticity should be viewed as a process that consists of interaction between materials, tasks and students. From that perspective, seemingly authentic materials might still feel inauthentic to students depending on the type of task the materials are used for and how they experience the learning situation. Autio (2012: 13-15) argues that materials are authentic when they have a

real communicative purpose and when they are used in a similar manner as they would be used in their original context. Her example comes from studying poetry in classroom, where a poem could certainly be considered an authentic text, but its authenticity is greatly diminished if it is used to teach grammar. Although I would argue that in the right sort of situation the understanding of grammar might be relevant for understanding the poem itself. Indeed, Autio (2012: 15-18) considers that authentic tasks account for the communicative purpose of an authentic text. To start off, the communicative purpose of a text should be identified. Autio (2012: 14) has a few categories for texts, such as informative, persuasive or engaging texts that can be useful for understanding what kind of texts students will deal with during the course (materials seeking to inform the reader about how women are represented in games, for one). Once the text has been identified, it is possible to choose a task that suits it, as seen in Autio (2012: 17). Since Autio (ibid.) considers analysis an authentic task, it is possible to see how studying a screenshot from a game depicting a female character might be an authentic task based on authentic materials (e.g. the students could be using the screenshot to form a text of their own, something they might do in a discussion forum). Finally, Autio (2012: 18) reminds that teachers should also be aware of learner experiences during the task.

A similar point is made by Kaikkonen (2004: 174-175), who stresses that authenticity is based on immediate communicational experiences and that language education should give students real experiences about language and language use, allowing learners to reflect on their performance. He also notes that students, in addition to being able to process information cognitively, are also social and emotional beings. Kaikkonen (ibid.) further elaborates that emotional and social aspects of language learning are often downplayed in schools, even though an emotional reaction to a text (either positive or negative) can enhance learning. Thus, authenticity seems like a multifaceted concept to Kaikkonen (ibid.), who argues that authenticity should not be reduced to one concept, such as the authenticity of a text. Considering that the representation of women in video games is a rather controversial issue at the moment of writing, it is easy to see how multimodal texts representing women might elect real

emotional responses from students. It is also important for a teacher to realize that students might not feel like she or he does – being able to discuss differing experiences is likely to enhance learning during the course, potentially giving students perspective on how their peers feel about different texts.

Since authentic texts can elect emotional responses from students, it seems sensible to suggest that authenticity in language learning might increase motivation. Autio (2012: 22) states that motivation has been usually accepted as one of the most affective factors of learning a foreign language, although the role of authentic materials in producing learner motivation is not unproblematic. Autio (ibid.) mentions that there are several theories about how the use of authentic materials affects motivation, ranging from students enjoying the real communicative goal in authentic texts to students being motivated because they encounter the real language – that is, how language is really used outside the classroom, with all its errors and complexities. Furthermore, Autio (2012: 20-21) points out how authentic texts can be current examples of contemporary language, offering both up-to-date perspectives on communication and challenges posed by writers' different strategies and abilities in conveying their message – something that is usually missing from modified classroom materials. Indeed, Autio (2012: 22) also states that the challenge inherent in interpreting many authentic texts is a source of motivation, as well as a sense of accomplishment upon success.

Autio (2012: 19-20) bases a good portion of the benefit authentic materials offer to second language education on the input hypothesis. Basically, only comprehensive input contributes towards learning a second language. Texts that are too difficult or too easy offer little to the learner. In this context, challenge means that the text should be just a little above a learner's proficiency level. Although it is hard to offer texts that are suitable for an entire class, cooperative learning tasks should lift some of this burden. In addition, Autio (2012: 26-27) rightly points out that a complete comprehension of a text is not necessarily a desirable goal: people often encounter texts they cannot understand completely. In this case, cooperative learning (consider

zone of proximal development) and correctly designed tasks can help learners to make the most of texts that might otherwise be daunting. The challenge may not be entirely linguistic, either. It is likely that some students taking this course lack even a basic understanding of video games, in which case their peers might be able to support them.

After considering how authentic materials challenge the learner and promote learning, often by offering examples of current language, Autio (2012: 23-24) elaborates on the concept of learner autonomy. Based on how Autio sees the concept, authentic texts involve a high level of learner autonomy, because they demand significant contributions and investment. Furthermore, Autio (2012: 23) mentions a definition according to which one characteristic of authentic texts is that learners are allowed to analyze message systems themselves. In a cooperative learning situation, multiple students are able to negotiate the meanings they have constructed with their peers, perhaps arriving to some sort of consensus.

Once again, placing emphasis on learner experience and how they construct knowledge is a view on language learning that is very beneficial considering the basis of this course on constructivism as a theory of learning and knowledge. While authentic texts can be challenging, especially when coupled with new terms from feminist critical discourse analysis theory, this course would not be possible without considering real life examples of representation and discussion about representations. Indeed, within the context of this course, negotiation about what a certain text represents might become an authentic task that ties students' knowledge with their individual attitudes and experiences, allowing some meanings to be taken-as-shared in the classroom. Of course, it is entirely possible that students will never reach a consensus about a given text, which is in itself a valuable learning experience. Naturally, students can help each other to understand challenging texts, perhaps providing each other with additional insight.

4.5 Summary

Constructivism guides how this course understands knowledge and learning. Instead of trying to offer ready interpretations of women in video games (based on my views, for example), the focus of the course is on promoting student discussion in order to allow students to explore their points of view. This kind of approach requires environment where students can trust each other enough to ask questions and to discuss their beliefs.

Advanced learners can benefit from both their language and gaming skills because the course utilizes content and language learning as one of its pedagogical methods. CLIL allows the course to combine language learning with studying the representation of women in video games. Although there are some concerns about students' ability to learn content through a foreign language, research has shown that CLIL does not put students at a disadvantage when it comes to learning content. Whether students get to speak enough in a class is another issue, however. There might not be enough time for every student to speak during a lesson, which is a problem if the course is supposed to teach English beyond listening comprehension.

Since students need to discuss their viewpoints in order to gain a better understanding of the course content, however, it is likely that everyone will get a chance to speak English. As mentioned above, students need to communicate and to trust each other for this course to work. That might not happen unless students are taught group work skills explicitly. The course material package will include tasks and resources that are explicitly focused on improving group work skills. Furthermore, the design of the entire course follows the principles of individual accountability and positive interdependence. For example, some tasks include roles, which indicate clear areas of responsibility. The cooperative learning method benefits CLIL too, because students should be able to address difficult language items together.

The authenticity of the course materials can be subject to debate considering that

students will not take part in online discussions about video games, although they can certainly act as consumers of video game media. I believe students can have a real discussion about how gender and representation work in video games, however: when students read an article about women as gamers, they are not doing so to study new words. Since the materials used during the course have been produced by real people for communicative needs, they may be challenging to use. It is my hope that the cooperative learning method will mitigate the challenge posed by the course materials by allowing students to support each other.

5 Description of the course

The present chapter will discuss how the course's materials, theory and aims work together. I will start by considering the aims of the course explicitly, detailing how the course's focus and materials support its aims. Afterwards, I will specify the target group and detail the reasons why the focus is on those students. Having done that, I will offer a brief overview on the themes discussed during the course and how the course's pedagogical approaches (the cooperative learning method and content and language integrated learning) work during the course. Finally, I will discuss course assessment.

5.1 Aims of the course and the course materials

This section discusses the aims of the course and the materials used during it. In addition to connecting the goals of this course to the Finnish national core curriculum, the section will also return briefly to thoughts presented in the above chapters about discourse analysis (chapter 3) and pedagogical theory (chapter 4), considering them from the point of view of course goals and materials. Finally, the section will outline the expected outcomes of the course.

I feel that the goals of the course are closely connected to the core values presented in the national core curriculum. For instance, LOPS 2003 (2015: 12) states that students should learn to see conflicts between stated values and the surrounding reality during upper secondary education. While someone might claim that equality has been reached and that feminism is not needed, it is a shortsighted illusion at best. If anything, the progress we have made towards equal rights have obscured the areas in which we still need to develop and grow. Power and prestige are not always divided equally, which becomes apparent when one gives video game characters even a cursory glance. It is often men who get to have all the power and prestige, whereas women are reduced to trophies in the worst cases (the early episodes of *Feminist Frequency* (2015c) discuss the topic of women as trophies and decoration in detail – see chapter 2 for full discussion regarding video games).

Furthermore, our national core curriculum (LOPS 2003, 2014: 12) includes goals such as tolerance and international cooperation. Considering that many gaming communities are international by their very nature, discussion surrounding the representation of women is carried out by a multivoiced community whose members come from a diverse range of educational and cultural backgrounds. The present course aims towards constructive discussion that is both tolerant and understanding towards different views and opposing voices without losing the ability to think critically for oneself. Through cooperative learning and group work, students can learn how to discuss their opinions with others, hopefully realizing that their own views are not necessarily held by everyone in the class. While Gillies (2007) promotes teaching group work skills in order to fully utilize the cooperative learning method, it is also necessary to discuss the nature of our group work in the early stages of the course to establish mutual respect and understanding between students. It is my hope that this course can provide a safe learning environment in which the students are free to explore their views with others, fearing neither ridicule nor unreasonable demands from one's teacher or peers. At the same time, this course subscribes to feminist and constructivist ideology and it is only fair to make students aware of the fact.

In addition to the above, simply discussing different representations of women in video games between students will not exactly help the students to do well in a real online conversation, where the participants may come from very diverse backgrounds. I believe it is therefore necessary to also inspect video game media, paying special attention to texts that are products of diverse communities. Because these texts (like the games they are based on) are produced for real communicational needs, they could be considered authentic, and I believe that the tasks will be even more authentic when students have to position themselves as audience for these texts, attempting to make sense of them together. In time, it will also be possible for the students to make their own texts, using what they have learned during the course.

The cooperative learning method also supports the goals of the Finnish national core curriculum. LOPS 2003 (2015: 24) specifically mentions that upper secondary education should prepare students to work in groups and as a part of different networks. The exact wording places emphasis on cooperation; simply co-existing is not enough. Thus both the goals of the course and the methods used during it necessitate tasks and materials that promote group work and give each student reasons and opportunities to participate. LOPS 2003 (ibid.) definitely sees students as active constructors of their own world views. Indeed, LOPS 2003 (2015: 24) states that students should be made aware about how their own actions (and the actions of others) can change the surrounding reality. These goals are something that feminist critical discourse analysis can help with, making students aware of how language and social action are connected. While the focus of this course is on gender and representation, LOPS 2003 (2015) also gives us a good reason to pay special attention to identity and how identities are constructed/performed. After all, our national core curriculum consistently promotes positive growth and assisting students to fully realize themselves as human beings. Becoming aware of how media (such as video games) represents people will also give us opportunities to talk about identity and how representations and identities are connected. Discourses, as introduced by Gee (2015: 107), provide one answer to how language is used to construct socially

recognizable identities (see section 3.1 for more details). It is not enough to understand how the language we use affects others – we also need to understand how the language we and others use affects us.

Having taken this course, I expect that students will be able to use and understand the basic concepts of feminist critical discourse analysis (such as discourse, gender, representation and identity). I believe the course will help students to understand themselves and each other, both increasing their group work skills and knowledge of themselves. In accordance with LOPS 2003 (2015: 29), this course should also teach students critical media literacy, which should help students to inspect issues of power, equality, gender and representation.

5.2 Target Group

The present course is aimed for Finnish upper secondary education students who are close to graduating. Considering this is an elective course, it should coexist with more traditional English courses. The ideal class size for this course would be around 20 students, allowing for five groups of four students, which Gillies (2007: 7) considers an effective group size for cooperative learning. While the material package has been designed for 20 students, a teacher should be able to modify the course contents based on the actual number of students who are taking the course.

This course could present a challenge to many Finnish upper secondary education students despite their assumed level of proficiency. After all, not all students will reach the intended level of knowledge (based on LOPS 2003, 2015) by the end of their studies and many of those who do may still not have any knowledge about video games. Fewer still, I expect, will be versed in discourse analytical theory or even the discussion about gender and representation. It is possible that working in English in a CLIL environment can be a challenge in itself and the same applies to working with the cooperative learning method. While there is an ample amount of discussion

concerning gender roles, division of power and representation in social media (especially where gaming is concerned), it is remarkably easy to miss those sources. That said, I expect a varied group of students, with mixed abilities and knowledge. Ideally, we would all be comfortable speaking English all the time, but there is no educational reason to keep speaking English if it becomes a barrier for communication or a gateway to endless frustration. As Jakonen (2014: 60) noted, L1 is an acceptable resource for communication in CLIL classrooms. It is entirely possible that a class will not have a shared L1, but it should be noted that L1 is seen here as a possible fallback rather than an actively utilized resource.

Although I mentioned student differences above, gaming is an area that might require some additional consideration. As far as the course design goes, my assumption is that most students are at least familiar with the concept of video games, even if they have not played any games themselves. I do not, however, expect or require more extensive knowledge regarding video games and video gaming culture, although it could certainly be helpful – or perhaps even a little detrimental. After all, many established gamers might already subscribe to rigid assumptions about how women and men should be represented in games. Still, the aim of this course is not to teach people to accept one kind of representation and damn the other. Rather, the focus is on promoting communication and understanding.

Considering the above paragraph, one could ask who benefits from the course the most. What kind of student should take this course? Interest in gaming and gender discussion is certainly helpful, but it is likely that even avid gaming enthusiasts will not come to understand the issues concerning the representation of women in video games completely during the course. Since the topics covered during the course would easily fit an entry-level university course, people wanting to apply to a university would probably benefit from the orientation that this course can provide. Anyone whose future studies might be compatible with discourse analysis might, indeed, find this course directly helpful. Moreover, since we touch current social issues (which will likely remain the case for a good while, although the focus of discussion might shift),

basically anyone can benefit from the chance to discuss issues related to gender, representation and identity with a group of peers.

5.3 Course content, themes and materials

So far, I have established that the main theme of this course is inspecting the representation of women in video games. How does the course achieve this in practice, however? The material package might give one answer, but I will describe the intent behind my choices in this section. Considering that the present course is probably the first time students encounter discourse analysis, the course does not assume that students have knowledge of even the most basic discourse analytical concepts, such as understanding language as social activity, as seen in Pietikäinen and Mäntynen (2009) or Fairclough (2001). As far as the course's learning goals go, teaching discourse analysis does not take primacy over other themes. Topics and contents will be introduced, but proficiency is not demanded. Furthermore, chapters 5.3.1 and 5.3.2. below discuss how direct examples from video games are intended for students to analyze game content whereas media examples are aimed at giving students perspectives on the multiple voices present in gaming communities.

There are three major discourse analytical concepts which will be used during the course: gender, representation, identity. These themes will be utilized in relation to various gaming phenomena (which are introduced in chapter 2). To support our understanding of video games, we also need the concept of multimodality as it is discussed in Ventola et al. (2004: 1) (see section 3.6). I believe considering multimodality will help students to be explicit about what they can pay attention to while making observations concerning the representation of women in video games. Having established what can be analyzed, I expect to make students reasonably aware of what gender can be by discussing the topic with them and showing the students examples of gendered phenomena, such as gendered armor, and how women and men are portrayed differently in video games.

The course moves from general context to specific details. The first lesson is centered around addressing students' expectations and giving them some necessary background information about the course and its aims. Afterwards, the lessons move to cover identity and representation, also expanding on the subject of gaming culture. This is where the students will learn more about women as gamers and expectations tied to gender. Afterwards, the course lays some groundwork on textual intervention and introduces feminist critical discourse analysis. In the middle of the course, students will already receive instructions about the final assignment, which is a presentation that discusses one (or more) of the course's themes. Once students are familiar with the final assignment, the following two lessons are focused on playing a video game and then making an attempt to understand multimodality based on their experiences. Finally, students get to work with textual interventions. The last two lessons before the presentations are reserved for working on the final assignment in class, where teacher scaffolding may be provided. This should also give the teacher an impression about how the presentations have progressed. The presentations should take a fair amount of time (depending on class size), especially since they will be discussed in class (providing the presenters with feedback from their peers).

5.3.1 Video games as course materials

When considering video games as teaching materials, it would be natural to assume that one would use an entire game in some way. Indeed, in ideal circumstances, a teacher would be able to provide games for everyone taking the course. However, video games and classroom time are finite resources. In the best-case scenario, it is possible to install some free games to school computers, but I do not assume that option in the material package. While I intend to offer students some ideas about games they could inspect outside the classroom or ask them to find their own examples/use games they already like, students will use more limited materials in the classroom. Namely, the course materials are centered around inspecting screenshots (pictures) and gameplay footage (e.g. YouTube materials).

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If games are meant to be played, how are pictures or videos of games going to feel authentic at all? As games, they are not. However, as Kaikkonen (2004: 174) points out, authenticity should not be reduced to mean one thing only. From Kaikkonen's (2004: 173-174) point of view, any task can be authentic as long as students feel they are the ones responsible for their learning. In this sense, discussion about the representation of women in video games can feel very authentic if students get invested in it – a goal which can be supported by showing them examples of real, commercially successful (or unsuccessful) games. Instead of inspecting textbook examples of sexism, we are actually looking at what entire teams of specialists and skilled professionals have done to make their game successful. Even if our analysis shows that gender is not relevant in our example, we can stand to learn something about representation and how everything is not automatically tied to gender.

As I implied above, actual gameplay would be the best option for learning more about a game. If you play a fighting game, does the woman you are playing as feel weak compared to the men? Is she a joke character? Or are there both strong and weak women in the game? Indeed, what does it mean to be weak or strong in the game? Are there also strong and weak men in the game? Are all top tier characters men? These are questions you cannot answer without playing the game yourself. Even if one reads a professional analysis of character tiers in fighting games, it is still a different experience to play the game oneself. Seen like this, a character (or an avatar) would be a tool-kit (Gee, 2015: 18). Indeed, some characters that seem weak may in fact turn out to be excellent as one's skill develops. One might master using a tool in a similar way, learning how it can be applied effectively in different situations. Furthermore, it might be possible to have students analyze the games they already play, but this approach may require some thought as not all students will play games or have access to the required resources, such as a device required for playing video games. The course material package includes one chance to play an actual video game, however, including suggestions for games that anyone should be able to access.

Having established that we can use pictures and video footage for authentic tasks, how does one actually use them in a classroom? Pictures, I believe, will be slightly easier to analyze and they will be suited especially for the early stages of the course, when students are not yet familiar with the concept of discourse analysis or all the tools we are going to use. Video footage, on the other hand, should capture the multimodal nature of video games a lot better. A screenshot may allow us to examine the appearance and design of a character, but video footage will show us how the character acts, what she or he sounds like and how other characters react to the character. It is my belief that students will find video footage harder to analyze, especially if we do not have the resources to let them view the footage at their own pace (on their own devices rather than from a screen). At the same time, I also believe that video footage will provide more resources to group discussions: people will have paid attention to different things and they might not agree with each others' interpretations. It is possible to use the principles of cooperative learning to tailor tasks so that each member of the group actively pays attention to different aspects of the footage (e.g. appearance, voice, status and interaction style). If one video features multiple characters, it is also feasible to have each member of the group to specialize in one character (in which case every member of the group is needed to form a comprehensive opinion about the entire scene and the characters involved in it).

Depending on the game, we may not be limited to actual gameplay, screenshots and video footage either. Some games feature extensive narratives we can read and inspect. We can, for example, take a look at *League of Legends* and inspect how the characters' narratives match their appearances and how they are portrayed in the game itself. This is one possibility during the video game exercise in the material package. Gee (2015: 18), for example, seems to consider the individual stories of avatars important to establishing their identity, affecting how we experience playing as an avatar and what we can expect from them. In addition, YouTube and similar services offer the option of watching cutscenes in a classroom. We will also look at how games are being marketed, though that borders on the subject of video gaming media, which will be covered in the following section. For example, *Mass Effect 3*

advertising usually features the protagonist, Shepard, as a man – even though Shepard can be a man or a woman (as the player prefers). In fact, when *Bioware* started using Shepard as a woman for marketing, it was considered a news item. For examples, see *The Escapist* (2011), *The Mary Sue* (2012a) and *The Mary Sue* (2012b).

5.3.2 Video gaming media as course materials

Like video games, video gaming media is a multimodal phenomenon. Ranging from written reviews, blogs and discussion forum posts to let's play videos, live streams and video reviews, there is certainly no shortage of video gaming media outlets. Some producers of this content act as individuals, whereas larger series can be a collaboration of several participants or even organizations, such as video gaming magazines. There is also lively discussion surrounding video gaming media. For example, there are whole online communities built around watching highly competitive players play against each other. There is also variety within and across competitive gaming communities. Video gaming magazines usually bring their audiences together in forums or similar discussion platforms and gamers also create content in various blogs, videos and forums that may not be connected to magazines or similar sources of information at all. Furthermore, it is more common to find gaming media online these days, although some printed magazines have kept their appeal (e.g. *Pelit* in Finland). Even those magazines, however, tend to have actively maintained web pages and discussion forums. Indeed, there are many sources of gaming news (specialized or otherwise) that are available only online.

During the present course, we can make use of these media sources in various ways. Regardless of the source, it is often possible to find traces of representation(s) of people as gamers and other similar discourses (i.e. what does it mean to be a gamer). All video gaming media help students to understand gaming communities as whole – as in, who the players, game developers and game companies are. By inspecting video gaming media, it is possible to get fresh perspectives and controversial opinions about all the games we analyze during the course.

Video gaming media (as a source) has one critical advantage over direct examples taken from video games when it comes to authenticity: it is easier to find media examples of video games that discuss a relevant phenomenon while forming a cohesive whole. Instead of offering a piece separated from context (e.g. a cutscene or a picture of a character without sound/movement), a gaming article or a YouTube video usually offers a sufficient amount of context on its own. In other words, watching and reading video gaming media already accounts for the communicative function of the text, which is one criteria which Autio (2012: 15-18) gives for authentic materials. For example, a post by *Bikini Armor Battle Damage* (2015b) might cover a picture of a character with commentary about what the blog agrees/does not agree with. Seeking to understand these media examples helps students to get a better grasp of a media source as well as the issues the source wishes to discuss. Since promoting media literacy is one of the course's goals, it is beneficial to include all kinds of sources, which hopefully gives students more room to discuss and form their own opinions.

When discussing video gaming media examples as course materials, it is also necessary to devote some thought to copyright issues. According to an article by *Operight* (2015a), texts that are not plays or movies that have been published to a large audience (more than 50 people) can be used in Finnish schools, especially if they are presented in their original Internet context (in the page where it originally appeared in, for instance). In addition, *Operight* (ibid.) states that once a text has been made available to an extremely large audience, it can be assumed that it is the author's wish that the text spreads among viewers. I believe that the sources I present in the material package have been published for the sole purpose of spreading their message to as many people as possible, which would make them usable in a classroom. While not all Let's Play videos include comments about liking the video and spreading the word, for instance, the producers of that kind of content are usually looking to increase their follower count. Similarly, it is my understanding that sources like *Bikini Armor Battle Damage* (2015a), *Jimquisition* (2015) and the *Hawkeye Initiative* (2015) all wish to promote discussion and want exposure. If a teacher wants to look for their

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own materials, though, they should avoid using sources that require a password to access (i.e. a forum post in a members-only section that guests cannot read) and content that has been published to 20 or less people, as seen in the article by *Operight* (2015). In fact, I would not use sources intended for less than 50 people, just to be on the safe side. The content the present course uses is intended for hundreds or thousands. In addition, it is always wise to make one's sources available (by citing where a blog post comes from, for instance). However, Operight (2015b) states that YouTube videos should not be broadcasted even in educational settings. In order to abide by the YouTube (2015) terms of service, each student will have to access the materials via their own devices. The content is meant to be accessed, but mostly for personal use (unless a teacher requests permission separately).

5.4 Teaching methods during the course: CLIL and cooperative learning

I have introduced both CLIL and cooperative learning in some detail when discussing the course's pedagogical theory (see chapter 4). Here, I will consider what implications CLIL and cooperative learning have to course materials and task design.

Content and language integrated learning should have a fairly predictable effect on how the course will be carried out. Although the teaching language during the course is English, there will be very little explicit language instruction. For the most part, students should encounter texts that are written in English and they should be encouraged to operate in English as much as possible. A teacher should observe students' progress during the course and allow the use of a L1 or other strategies if it is difficult to convey meaning via the target language. However, the course material package will assume that students are able to use the target language in a meaningful way in order to complete the tasks in English and to discuss their findings together. Therefore, it falls upon individual teachers to facilitate students' language learning.

Cooperative learning, on the other hand, has various implications to task design and

learning practices during the course. In fact, the cooperative learning method requires some special tasks of its own, as Gillies (2007: 4-5) notes. She promotes teaching students how to communicate with each other in a way that facilitates teamwork, how to take turns and how to make decisions in a democratic manner. Therefore, the course materials will have a fair share of tasks entirely dedicated to cooperative learning (in addition to content that is focused around the course's actual content, the representation of women in video games). Coyle et al. (2010: 29) note that CLIL, like cooperative learning, requires students to be taught how to collaborate before they can complement each others' strengths and weaknesses effectively. They further stress that the development of group work skills cannot left up to a chance; the skills have to be taught explicitly. Moreover, Jolliffe (2007: 3) and Gillies (2007: 4-5) promote individual accountability and positive interdependence as cornerstones of cooperative learning. For example, Gillies (2007: 6) promotes tasks that are suitably challenging to demand multiple experts (something CLIL likely contributes to as well: the entire group is working with a foreign language and not all students know the same words and expressions). She also states that tasks should be open-ended – an observation that will be reflected on how the course materials approach discourses. It is fortunate that many discourses do not allow for one simple interpretation that is always right. In that way, the cooperative learning methods used during the course actually benefit from the open-ended nature of discussion about discourses.

5.5 Course Assessment

This section answers three questions: which aspects of the course should be assessed, what do I hope to achieve with course assessment and how will the different aspects of the course be assessed in practice. I will start by considering course assessment in relation to the course goals, reflecting on what skills the course should teach and why they should be assessed. Having done that, I will discuss what impact different areas and methods of assessment have on learning and the course in general. Finally, I will provide a brief overview of how course assessment will be carried out. In the interest

of clarity, I will provide a short list of course goals below:

- Promoting critical thinking and media literacy skills together with game literacy (especially via feminist critical discourse analysis)
- Supporting tolerance
- Providing students with group work skills with a focus on active cooperation, which may also give students tools for international cooperation.
- Creating an atmosphere which allows open discussion and development of ideas
- Increasing students' awareness about their own power and possibilities
- Encouraging and guiding students where possible (especially via course assessment)
- Supporting positive growth and preparing students for work or further studies
- Reaching a reasonable understanding of the representation of women in video games (further understanding of discourse analysis or the representation of women should not be expected or enforced, but there is no reason not to promote either if a teacher perceives a reasonable chance for it). Gender and representation are the most important discourse analytical terms discussed during the course, but identity, discourse and multimodality are also concepts the course focuses on.
- Learning English through using the language to talk about course themes and participating in group discussions
- Developing communication skills
- Communicating course ideology and aims to students
- Keeping course materials up to date and developing the course based on feedback and course assessment

5.5.1 Course assessment in relation to course goals

Generally speaking, this course has three core areas of learning as far as assessment and learning goals are concerned. Firstly, there are the common learning goals set by our national core curriculum (LOPS 2003, 2015), which detail general guidelines about what goals education in Finland has. Secondly, the cooperative learning method

is used very prominently during this course, which makes assessing its effects paramount. Finally, there is the actual course content: understanding the representation of women in video games through selected, basic concepts drawn from feminist critical discourse analysis.

LOPS 2003 (2015: 220) indicates that upper secondary education should encourage positive growth. Indeed, the Finnish national core curriculum promotes encouragement and guidance as core aspects of assessment. It also notes that students are not the only ones who can benefit from course assessment: information gained through observation can help a teacher to develop their teaching practices, either to answer short-term concerns, to inform teaching practices or to alter course design. The last part is especially relevant for this course because even when the package is ready, it is actually only ready for piloting. Issues that require development will most likely emerge should the course be carried out in practice (which, while not a part of the present thesis, is something I hope to do in the future).

Regarding CLIL, Dalton-Puffer (2014:15) speaks about promoting intercultural communication skills, which is a goal in content and language integrated learning. Perhaps it is possible to get a feel about students' intercultural communication skills by observing how well the CLIL approach takes root in the classroom. In addition, Dalton-Puffer (ibid.) states that CLIL education should provide students with access to subject-specific target language terminology and opportunities to study content through multiple perspectives. From this point of view, it is necessary to keep an eye on how well students take to the subject matter and terminology. I believe that it is not necessary to actually grade or formally assess the depth of vocabulary students acquire during the course, however. Regardless, it is important to be aware of these factors while observing the class in order to react to the students' needs and to develop the course further. Although Dalton-Puffer was clearly talking about CLIL, I think this approach applies to the course material package in general.

Discussing with my peers, the most common criticism I have heard concerning this

course is that early university level concepts might be hard to address at upper secondary education level. Therefore, the learning goals of the course should be made fairly reasonable: I would be happy if the course gave students an idea about what university education can be like and access to some tools that can enhance critical thinking (especially where the representation of women in video games is concerned). To this end, informal assessment and a pass/fail grade will likely serve students' needs the best. Fortunately, the Finnish national core curriculum (LOPS 2003, 2015: 221) states that it is acceptable to use pass/fail grading in an elective upper secondary education course, as dictated by a school's curriculum. Further below, I will discuss about how content knowledge will be assessed in practice.

The goals stated in LOPS 2003 (2015) and Dalton-Puffer (2014: 15) resonate with the aims of cooperative learning and how it should be assessed, as seen in Jolliffe (2007) and Gillies (2007). Primarily, Gillies and Jolliffe are concerned about assessing cooperative learning skills. While group work is a relatively simple concept, both writers state that cooperative learning skills should not be taken for granted and that they should be taught and assessed explicitly. Jolliffe (2007: 87) promotes involving students in assessment. Likewise, Gillies (2007: 160-161) also speaks about peer assessment and self-assessment during a course that utilizes the cooperative learning method. While I will discuss the particulars in the two sections below, it seems clear to me that students should be made aware of their own progress as learners, which should help them to develop their cooperative learning skills as well as their content knowledge. Furthermore, a teacher should not be the only source of assessment, nor should the only method of assessment be a formal grade or appraisal. In addition to having multiple people providing feedback, it is also important to remember that this course draws heavily upon the cooperative learning method as well as feminist critical discourse analysis. Therefore, as Jolliffe (2007: 87) suggests, it is important to assess both learning skills and learning objectives – or in this case, how students work in groups and how they approach the issues that are being discussed during the course (skills), and what they have actually learned about the issue (learning objectives).

5.5.2 The effects of assessment to learning and the course

Returning to the basic principles of the Finnish national core curriculum (LOPS 2003, 2015: 220), the purpose of assessment is to encourage and guide students. That is an overarching theme that I want to maintain with course assessment from the first lesson to the last one. While I believe it is necessary to teach students to give and receive constructive feedback, I also want to make sure that students can discuss their work and views in a safe environment. Thus, the first effect I hope the course assessment to have is to provide an open and encouraging atmosphere which promotes participation and sharing one's views even (and especially if) they are not quite polished yet. Moreover, I hope that ongoing assessment can help students refine their views and come to informed conclusions by working together. These effects will not happen on their own, however. It is necessary to discuss the purpose of assessment with the students, as well as how one gives and receives feedback. It might even be beneficial to consider individual preferences in groups (e.g. *too serious feedback makes me uncomfortable*) before providing feedback in order to promote awareness about how people feel about feedback. One way to achieve this could be discussing how students feel about giving and receiving feedback in groups, or talk about the feedback they got and how it made them feel (and perhaps which parts they found constructive/helpful).

The above effects should be present in the assessment conducted by the teacher, but also in peer assessment and self-assessment. According to Jolliffe (2007: 87), sharing responsibility improves productivity and learning, in addition to which it helps to balance group assessment with individual assessment. Peer assessment gives everyone a chance to receive feedback about both their ideas and how they have participated in group tasks – a teacher would not be able to cover that much ground alone. Moreover, Jolliffe (ibid.) states that peer assessment "-- has been shown to provide pupils with a sense of ownership over their learning". In addition, I believe that it is beneficial to get feedback from multiple sources. Indeed, it could be said that discussing and refining ideas (concerning the representation of women in video

games, especially) is one of the course's core aims. Gillies (2007: 160-161) believes that peer feedback is especially helpful because it helps students to focus on areas of their learning that need to be improved better than a grade given for a task. She adds that while students may find giving peer feedback challenging and even uncomfortable, it also appears to help students assess themselves and to improve the quality of their work.

While this course should not be graded beyond a simple pass-fail scale, that does not free the teacher from participating in course assessment. Indeed, Gillies (2007: 155) notes that teachers have to pay attention to "-- how students are managing the learning process (process learning) --" and "-- what they [students] are achieving (outcomes of learning) if they [teachers] are to make changes to how they teach and how students learn." Thus, a teacher does not only assess to correct student mistakes or even to provide additional insights to learners. It is similarly important to keep an eye on the validity of one's teaching practices. Ideally, students' sense of individual accountability would come from desire to participate in group tasks and feedback received from one's peers, but a teacher will also have to pay attention to how well groups are working in order to facilitate group work. In other words, while course assessment is not used to grade students, active observation should help a teacher to keep an eye on the students' progress, allowing them to facilitate the students' learning. In addition, following the students' progress allows a teacher to reflect on how their methods are working and which parts of the course could still be refined (on the spot or for later use, depending on the situation).

5.5.3 Course assessment in practice

LOPS 2003 (2015: 220) dictates that course assessment should not only be based on formal written examinations (which, in turn, are not explicitly required, although schools have their own curricula and standards). Indeed, LOPS 2003 (ibid.) supports ongoing assessment of students' progress during a course and using varied methods of assessment. In practice, this course will have four angles that provide teachers and

students alike with knowledge about progress made during the course. Throughout the course material package, I will include prompts for self-assessment and peer assessment, which make at least half of the relevant feedback each student can expect to receive during the course. Furthermore, ongoing assessment conducted by a teacher will keep the teacher up to date about the strengths and weaknesses of the course while allowing them to facilitate students' learning process. Finally, the students who take the course will deliver a presentation about a subject of their choosing, getting a chance to present an issue or a perspective to the whole class. By doing the presentation, they will demonstrate their understanding of the concepts and ideas discussed during the class.

Gillies (2007: 161) believes that peer assessment promotes self-assessment. Making a learning log about one's expectations and knowledge at the start of the course can serve as an aid for discussion (comparing early views and, later, reflecting on what has changed). Otherwise, I think it is enough for a teacher to ask informal questions during a class. Indeed, Jolliffe (2007: 87) suggests using a learning log as a tool for self-assessment. The purpose of a learning log (as it is used during the course) is not to write exhaustive essays, but to keep an eye on a student's development and give them a point of reference. Thus, almost any form of log could work. If students have access to the necessary technology, it would be possible to keep the log online or even have some kind of forum where students can follow each other's observations and make comments. I will offer a simple suggestion for implementing the learning log in the course materials package, but a teacher should feel free to modify how students keep track of their progress according to the resources they have. There are some challenges to consider, however. If a teacher creates a discussion forum for students, it may be a bit difficult to get the students to participate actively and using the forum may become a chore as well. Using smartphones to make brief notes during or after the class could also be a convenient way to keep a log. Regardless, a teacher would be wise to keep in mind that while smartphones seem like a common sight in schools, it is likely that there are still students who do not have one. Similarly, schools may or may not offer tablets or laptops to their students. That being the case, I try not to offer

any too resource-intensive solutions in the course materials. If a teacher feels they have access to the necessary resources, however, they should absolutely make use of them.

Jolliffe (2007: 88) also suggests giving time for reflection during the lessons. I feel that this approach may be applied with both self-assessment and peer assessment. Giving students time to write small log entries (homework) and then discussing key points with their group can help students compare their views with authentic conversation aids that may help them to keep the conversation up in English. Similarly, it is possible to add new insights to the learning log after a group discussion. The learning log and pauses for reflection can be used for assessing both content knowledge and learning practices. Indeed, I believe it will be wise to place a focus on assessing group work especially in the early stages of the course, but also possibly if group compositions are changed during the course (which is likely, though not mandatory if a teacher wishes to keep students in the same groups for the entire course – the decision is better left to an individual teacher). While group work may be a simple concept on paper, my experience is that people sometimes find it tedious and unsatisfying. I hope that by promoting constructive discussion students can come to understand their role as a member of a group. Furthermore, Gillies (2007: 40) uses peer assessment as one method to create a sense of individual accountability. Jolliffe (2007: 87) stresses that students should be provided with a clear criteria for peer assessment. I agree, although I believe that instead of using rubrics, a class could talk about how a good group operates and what students want from their group. If students can establish norms and standards they can agree on, perhaps the students will be more motivated to hold on to them. It might be also easier to understand why such standards are set in place in the first place. The final presentation, discussed further below, is a type of assessment where a rubric might be called for, allowing participants to keep track of all the skills the presentation is supposed to display more easily. It is also necessary to discuss how to give constructive feedback in order to make each presentation a successful exercise for the whole class.

During the course, a teacher's role in assessment is primarily based on formative assessment, as it introduced in Gillies (2007: 158). Whether a teacher observes the group informally or makes notes of who is contributing, she mentions that making formative assessment is not really feasible if the teacher does not move around in the classroom. Active observation, thus, is a key element of formative assessment. Personally, I am more fond of informal assessment and participation and as such there will not be any rubrics for making formative assessment associated with the course. However, it should be reasonably easy to have a checklist of the students taking the course and to make a small mark next to their names when they contribute.

In addition to formative assessment, Gillies (2007: 158-160) speaks about curriculum-based assessment (CBA). According to her, CBA revolves around using varied methods to gain information about how students process the content knowledge provided during the course and what progress they have made. In contrast to formative assessment, a teacher should refer to the learning goals attached to each lesson in the course materials package to see if students are making progress towards those goals. Gillies (2007: 159) remarks that "-- although teachers had access to some very sophisticated standardized reading tests, most regarded informal measures or formative assessment that they design, select and embed in the curriculum as more useful for teachers, students and parents than commercial instruments." Thus, I encourage a teacher to use their own methods for assessing progress during a course. For example, I am fond of participating group discussions and asking questions when students voice interesting points (whether the points are well-developed or need some scrutiny). The key point is understanding what a lesson's learning goals are and how well students have managed to reach them. This course is not aimed to provide students with exhaustive knowledge of even its most important discourse analytical concept, representation; formal tests measuring content knowledge would be an exercise in futility. One could say that the course is succeeding if a teacher observes growth and understanding regarding to how students perceive the representation of women in video games. Being able to apply that understanding to other contexts would be a desirable result as well, but it may not be something that can be achieved

reliably during a single course.

Indeed, continuous formative and curriculum-based assessment (based on course goals) should already give a teacher enough information about which students will pass the course. An effort to understand and active participation should already count, even if a teacher feels that a student just does not comprehend the issue (indeed, an informed researcher could argue this about a class of exceptional students in either case, considering how broad the field of discourse analysis is and how complex the topics discussed during the course can be). However, I believe it will be beneficial for students to have a goal simply beyond attending to the course. While students should be made reasonably aware about the course's learning goals, I believe that using and (more importantly) testing the knowledge students have accumulated will be another way for students to understand what they have learned. To this end, I will use a form of summative assessment suggested by Gillies (2007: 171), who mentions that a group presentation or a group assignment can be used "to measure what students have learned or have accomplished at the end of a period of instruction". Ideally, students will be made aware of the presentation as early as possible to give them a concrete goal to work towards. Since the presentation is not given a formal grade, I believe there is room to give students freedom in their choice of topic and delivery. On the other hand, it will be necessary to discuss each presentation afterwards, analyzing the content delivered and perhaps the method of delivery (making the exercise double as a language learning task). The details and time allocation for the presentation will be included in the course materials. I will also include a suggestion about how to review the task, but a teacher should feel free to make their own adjustments and adaptations. Given that the presentations will take a large part of the course's final lessons, it stands to reason that they should be used to their fullest extent. However, one should still strive towards a tone of encouragement and guidance, even with presentations that fall a little short.

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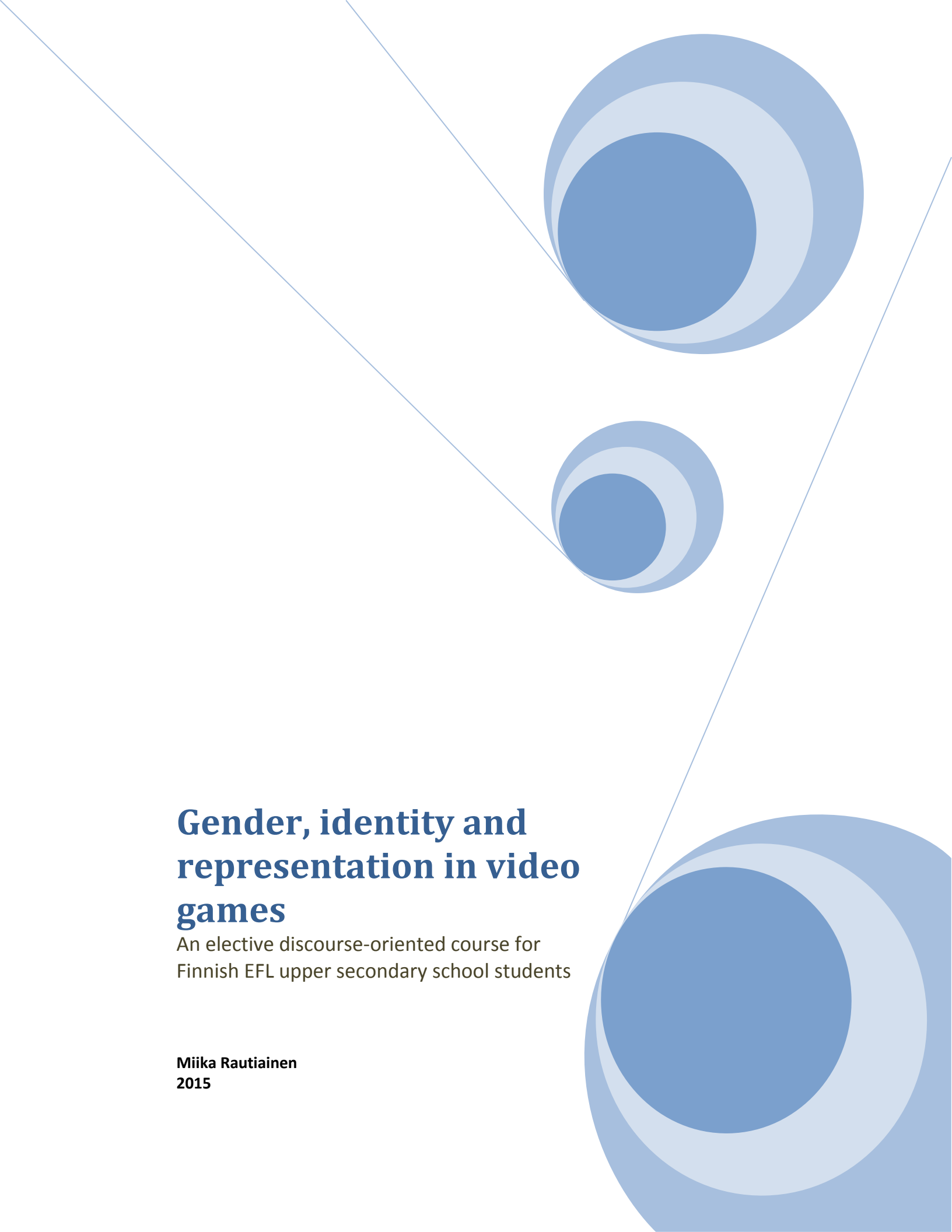
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Gender, identity and representation in video games

An elective discourse-oriented course for
Finnish EFL upper secondary school students

Miika Rautiainen
2015

Course Outline

Course overview

The representation of women and minorities in video games leaves much to be desired. The purpose of this elective EFL course is to promote understanding of gender and representation in video games by introducing students to feminist critical discourse analysis and gaming culture in order to promote critical media and gaming literacy. This course is intended for Finnish upper secondary education students who are about to graduate. During the course, the students and you learn English by exploring the representation of women in video games. In addition to being a Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) orientated, the course also makes frequent use of the Cooperative Learning method.

The representation of women in video games

This course exists mainly to raise awareness about the representation of gender in video games. Women, for instance, are often treated as background decoration in many games, although some games are showing a more positive example. The kind of awareness this course promotes, however, is not only tied to video games. Indeed, media is saturated with examples of very stereotypical gender representation in general. It is often women who end up being hurt by one-sided representation, especially because men often get to experience a greater variety of representation in all kinds of media. Regardless, the purpose of this course is not to point a finger at harmful stereotypes. Instead, I hope the course creates awareness about how representation works and how it can be altered in the interest of helping the students to become more critical towards what they hear, read and produce.

Furthermore, the course is relevant because Finnish schools still have a lot of work to do in order to address attitudes related to gender and sexuality. For instance, *Sukupuoli ja tasa-arvo koulussa* (Suortamo et al., 2010) shows us how we, as teachers, have work to do in order to understand the diverse range of colleagues, students and families we work with. This course is not a final answer to all questions related to equality, but I hope it is a step in the right direction. It has been my experience as a student, as well the experience of students younger than I with whom I have compared experiences, that Finnish schools do not really address topics like these even in upper secondary education. In fact, I only came to question gender roles properly in a university. While the course focuses on gender explicitly, issues of race and sexuality can also be analyzed in a similar manner. The course's focus is restricted to gender to keep the content manageable, but it would be reasonable to draw attention to race and sexuality if opportunities present themselves during classroom discussion.

Finally, you might wonder why this course covers video games instead of television, music or movies. Surely women are represented in all of the above? As I suggested above, this course can offer insights that can be translated to other mediums. Gaming, however, has

become an increasingly prevalent hobby among many people, not all of them young. Did you know that a gamer in the present-day USA is more likely to be an adult woman than a young boy? In some games, like PC role-playing games, women are actually the majority. Of course, my extensive background and interest in gaming has also influenced my choice of materials. In the course materials, I have included a selection of examples that are reasonably representative of how video games and video gaming media exist today, paying special attention to how women are represented in them. If you are a gamer yourself, you might notice that my selection of examples is mostly limited to the kind of games I play. Similarly, you might be aware of how some of my examples are going to feel dated even as you read the material package. You should definitely feel free to include examples from contemporary games you are interested in, as well as to listen to the examples students might wish to offer during the course.

Although it is not always the case, I am assuming that many teachers are at least somewhat unfamiliar with video games. I have attempted to provide sources that very much speak for themselves. Often, the sources have more context than what is required for the tasks. You might want to familiarize yourself with the background materials in order to feel comfortable discussing them with the students. That being said, you do not need to be a gaming expert. It is likely that the students know something about games already – and it is the students who should be doing the most thinking during the course. You should establish some kind of base knowledge concerning the students' gaming habits, however. It may be beneficial or even necessary to establish groups where there is at least one gaming expert present.

Teaching methods during the course: CLIL and cooperative learning

CLIL is realized mostly by using as much English during the course while focusing on the content (here: the representation of women in video games, which will be explored through the perspective of feminist critical discourse analysis). While you have a role in promoting English as the primary language of communication, all of the course materials are also in English. Should trouble arise, however, it is not absolutely necessary to stick to English - any shared language can be used to overcome communication barriers. You, as an EFL expert, are in a good position to assess students' language learning needs in order to provide scaffolding where necessary. While this is not a formal language course, you should make use of your expertise as a language teacher.

The Cooperative Learning method is heavily present in the task design. Most tasks are intended for groups of about four students. Indeed, every lesson in the course material package has been designed assuming a class of 20 students working in groups of 4. For this approach to succeed, the students should experience both positive interdependence and individual accountability (see the present study or Gillies 2007 for more information). In short, however, positive interdependence means that students experience that they all must work together to accomplish a goal. Individual accountability, in turn, is established by making every student feel responsible for doing their own share. Again, the task design

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plays a small part in establishing these factors. Most tasks assume that the students will in fact research and negotiate several phenomena related to the representation of women in video games together. For this to be truly successful, however, everyone should be encouraged (and required) to contribute to group work and discussions. In the best case scenario, the students will encourage each other to participate to make sure that nobody feels left out. In order to teach interpersonal skills, which are very much needed in order for the cooperative method to work, the course has a few instances where reflection is encouraged. Hopefully processing how groups operate during the course helps the students to see where they can improve and how they can make group work more rewarding for everyone.

For the most part, the course relies on informal assessment. There are some prompts during the course for the students and you to discuss group work. The final task of the course – making a presentation about a phenomenon discussed during the course (or at least related to the course's theme) – is basically the only method of formal assessment used during the course. The students should be encouraged to reflect on their development, however, and you would do well to keep an eye on language learning possibilities by following the students' work actively.

Course goals

- Promoting critical thinking and media literacy skills together with game literacy
- Supporting tolerance
- Providing students with group work skills with a focus on active cooperation, which may also give students tools for international cooperation.
- Creating an atmosphere which allows open discussion and development of ideas
- Increasing students' awareness about their own power and possibilities
- Encouraging and guiding students where possible (especially via course assessment)
- Supporting positive growth and preparing students for work or further studies
- Reaching a reasonable understanding of the representation of women in video games. Gender and representation are the most important discourse analytical terms discussed during the course, but identity, discourse and multimodality are also concepts the course focuses on.
- Learning English through using the language to talk about course themes and participating in group discussions
- Developing communication skills
- Communicating course aims to students. Being explicit about the feminist critical discourse analytical perspective this course takes.
- Keeping course materials up to date and developing the course based on feedback and course assessment

The role of the teacher

Gaming knowledge aside, your role during this course is to facilitate group work and help the students to address the course content while remaining alert to language learning opportunities. While English is not being taught formally, there are likely many language learning opportunities you can make use of if the situation allows. Furthermore, learning about the representation of women in video games and developing media literacy are both tied to language. As seen in Gillies (2007: 11), effective teachers recognize that students need to work on complex and interesting tasks and they use a variety of sources to stimulate students' interests. While the course materials aim to cover a portion of this task, you are always encouraged to come up with your own examples and sources. Similarly, Gillies (ibid.) notes that effective teachers model the types of talk they want students to use and encourage students to dialogue together. Some groups might be very efficient at teamwork and discussion, but you have to keep an eye on how all groups progress in order to make sure the class makes good use of the cooperative learning method. Moreover, Gillies (ibid.) states that effective teachers create opportunities for students to collaborate and promote high-order thinking while making sure that learning is student-centered, which works with the constructivist approach this course takes towards learning. Finally, Gillies (ibid.) points out that students should be encouraged to accept responsibility for their own learning and that teachers should provide students with explicit feedback on their progress. The students taking this course will likely get the most formal feedback during the end of the course, but you should take opportunities during the course to keep an eye on how they progress in order to offer suggestions and scaffolding. Similarly, it is good to encourage students to monitor their own progress.

In the end, though, your role during the course comes down to making sure that the course progresses smoothly. You are in a good position to offer the students help when they need it. Indeed, you can do a lot to promote positive learning experiences and to facilitate group work by teaching the students group work skills as the situation demands. Similarly, longer tasks may require organizational skills to conduct. You should keep an eye on how the students work even if they have dedicated a person to facilitating communication and managing time use – the students should be responsible for staying on task, but sometimes you must provide scaffolding in this regard as well.

Technology and copyright

This course makes very few assumptions about the technology that is available to you and the students. Basically, as long as you have access to the Internet, the course's contents can be modified or carried out without notable problems. However, if everyone in the class has access to devices like tablets or smartphones (while likely, this is not necessarily the case!), you could also consider making an electronic learning environment where the students can access all the relevant links and course materials through their own devices. Similarly, there are many simple games for tablets that you may be able to use for the practical portion of this course where the students actually play and analyze a game. It is

recommended to keep your options in mind when thinking about how to carry out the course.

When discussing video gaming media examples as course materials, it is also necessary to devote some thought to copyright issues. According to an article by *Operight* (2015a), texts that are not plays or movies that have been published to a large audience (more than 50 people) can be used in Finnish schools, especially if they are presented in their original Internet context (in the page where it originally appeared in, for instance). In addition, *Operight* (ibid.) states that once a text has been made available to an extremely large audience, it can be assumed that it is the author's wish that the text spreads among viewers. I believe that the sources I present in the material package have been published for the sole purpose of spreading their message to as many people as possible, which would make them usable in a classroom. If you want to look for your own materials (which I encourage), you should avoid using sources that require a password to access (i.e. a forum post in a members-only section that guests cannot read) and content that has been published to 20 or less people, as seen in the article by *Operight* (2015a). In fact, I would not use sources intended for less than 50 people, just to be on the safe side. The content the present course uses is intended to be viewed by hundreds or thousands.

You might also want to be aware of the fact that our law seems to understand movies in a very broad sense (see Operight 2015b). For instance, it is not automatically acceptable to distribute or show YouTube footage and footage from games even in educational contexts. Games, likewise, often have their own terms of service. If you consider streaming games (for example, google Twitch TV), I highly doubt that any game developers are going to come after you if you show clips or actual gameplay from their released games. **In both of these cases, however, you can ensure that you are not breaking any laws by having each student access the course materials with their own devices.** This also applies to the *Female Armor Bingo*, which will be used during this course. The makers of the bingo at *Bikini Armor Battle Damage* do not want you to spread copies of the bingo without permission. It should still be acceptable to show the bingo from their blog and to have students access their own bingo sheets.

Sources and further reading
Operight (2015a). Onko internetin sisältö julkaistua vai julkistettua?
　　　　http://www.operight.fi/artikkeli/verkkoymparistot/onko-internetin-sisalto-
　　　　julkaistua-vai-julkistettua (6 June 2015)

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　　　　nayttaa-opetuksessa (22 June 2015)

Central terms and concepts: definitions and additional resources.

In this section, I will provide definitions for some of the core concepts discussed during the class. I encourage you to browse through this section before starting the course. While these definitions are intended to support your needs as you are discussing them with students, they are introduced early on to facilitate a general understanding of the course's themes even before you delve into the course materials. The concepts are listed in an alphabetical order. In addition, **handout 1** under lesson 1 has the same terms for students in a condensed format. I recommend you give the handout a glance as well.

Central terms for teachers: themes and discourse

I have split this list of terms in two parts. The first part offers more detailed discussion on the terms and discourse analytical concepts discussing during the course. The second part is focused on discussing CLIL and the cooperative learning method, which are the main pedagogical approaches utilized by the course. Please note that **Handout 1: Central terms for students** is not split similarly: it includes every central term (pedagogical or otherwise) in an alphabetical order. Moreover, your version includes citations showing you exactly where you can find more information on some central concepts in case you want to do more research. All sources used to make these texts are listed under *sources and further reading* and every definition has used the sources more extensively than the citations (included for your convenience) indicate.

Casual/Hardcore Gamer

These terms, based on how I understand them as a longtime gamer, are introduced because they have some currency among gamers. Casual games are usually easy and accessible, whereas hardcore games are usually understood to be very complex or otherwise challenging (by demanding exceptional reflexes, for instance). There are no hard and fast rules about which games are casual and which are hardcore. Indeed, some gamers may claim that the same game is both casual and hardcore and sometimes they are very right, too, because many games allow for different approaches, which lead to different experiences as a result. For example, *World of Warcraft* (a popular massive multiplayer online role playing game) caters to both casual and hardcore gamers. If you play *WoW* by doing quests and engaging in easy and accessible content, then your playstyle could be described casual. If you, on the other hand, compete with other players in the hardest possible content in the game, you might be considered a hardcore player. Even so, there would be a difference between those players who engage in demanding game content daily as their profession and players who play a few hours in a week. Following that logic, it would be plausible to suggest that you are a hardcore gamer by playing *Farmville* if you dedicate a lot of time and effort in being successful, although some people might challenge the claim based on the perceived difficulty of the game itself

(i.e. *Farmville* is often given as an example of a casual game for casual players).

The distinction between casual/hardcore gamers is relevant also because women are often seen as casual gamers, whereas men are not usually required to prove their credibility in the same manner. However, many women are actually very enthusiastic gamers and associating women mainly with casual games (or a casual approach to a game) does everyone a disservice. Even so, I believe games are mostly about fun – as such, any approach to gaming is viable. A lot of women and men are casual gamers. In my experience, the hardcore/casual gamer separation becomes problematic when people (usually women) are not allowed to enjoy games the way they want because they are under pressure to prove their gaming skills or ridiculed for taking a casual approach to gaming.

Sources and further reading

This video, titled *Are Women the New Hardcore Gamers?* and produced by GDC (Game Developers Conference), has been broken into neat, accessible parts that may also work as a resource if you want to understand hardcore gamers and hardcore games better, as well as how women perceive the terms and gaming in general (*Defining Hardcore Gamer vs. Hardcore Game* in particular, but also *Why does hardcore even matter?*):

GDC (2010). Are Women the New Hardcore Gamers?
        http://www.gdcvault.com/play/1012221/Are-Women-the-New-Hardcore
        (21 June 2015)

Discourse

Discourse analysis views language as social activity. That is to say, one's choice of words is a meaningful action (whether one knows how those choices are interpreted or not). Instead of assuming that words have one or two true meanings, one should consider that language is open to interpretation and that one word might mean two different things to two different people, even if the word is used in the same context. If the context is also different, alternative interpretations are even more likely to occur. For example, *leashing* in the context of taking a dog out for a walk means something different from *leashing* in *League of Legends*. In the game, you used to be able to make a monster run after you so that the person whose job was to kill the monster could kill it without taking as much damage (because the monster was chasing you and not fighting the person). This tactic/term has already become obsolete in the context of *League of Legends*).

Pietikäinen and Mäntynen (2009: 26-28) use discourse to mean all linguistic and semiotic activity that has interactional and social norms and consequences, which captures the multimodal (more than just words are used to deliver the message) nature of most video gaming discourses excellently. You will also want to know how Gee (2015: 106) describes 'discourse' with a small 'd' as "-- stretches of talk or text, language in use in context." That

definition is quite similar to what Pietikäinen and Mäntynen say above. In addition, Gee makes a distinction between **discourse** and **Discourse**: "I use the term "Discourse," with a capital "D," for ways of combining and integrating language, actions, interactions, ways of thinking, believing, valuing, and using various symbols, tools, and objects to enact a particular sort of socially recognizable identity" (Gee, 2011: 29). Indeed, Gee (2015: 107) later expands that he uses Discourse to represent historically "recognizable identities", mentioning *a lawyer* and *a feminist* as examples. Gee (2015: 106) also connects the notion of Discourse with avatars (which could be considered virtual bodies in games). He says that Discourses "are ways to enact and recognize socially meaningful identities" and further explains that avatars are much the same. Like a Discourse, an avatar is a body, an identity and a tool-kit (Gee, 2015: 106-108). On a practical level, this could mean that we can inspect the avatar of a video game character (whether playable or non-playable) to see what meanings, or Discourses, are attached to them through multimodal means. In addition, Fairclough (2001: 18-19) considers that language and society have a deep relationship that goes both ways: the shape and nature of our society has an effect on the language we use and the language we use shapes how we experience our society.

Pietikäinen and Mäntynen (2009: 54) point out that discourses always present information from a certain perspective. They compare the effect to inspecting a warehouse with a flashlight; the light can illuminate only so many things. While this is an obvious limitation of communication (it is simply not feasible to consider everything in most cases), it is also a source of considerable discursive power. Who gets to speak, who is not heard, how are people described and who gets to describe them are all relevant questions. In the context of gaming, it would be relevant to consider both women as gamers and as video game characters. Are women dubbed casuals who are mostly interested in games like *Candy Crush*? If so, who gets to define women as gamers? Furthermore, what is a casual game? Are games equal or do some games or skills have special value? Are some representations of women as video game characters damaging? Why? To whom? These all are questions that can be explored in depth when following gaming media and related discussions.

By now, you might want a concrete example of how this all fits together. If *a gamer* is a Discourse, then *moar DoTs* (where a player calls for more damage-over-time effects on a target and also makes a *World of Warcraft* joke) and *I need that loot* could be examples of phrases typical of a discourse *a gamer* could utilize. As seen in Gee (2015: 106-108), *a gamer* needs access to discourses in order to be considered *a gamer* in the first place. In the fantasy MMORPG *World of Warcraft*, being able to use terms like *DoT* could be a sign of expertise. You might also need to know how to speak like *a healer* (one might call it the discourse of healers in *WoW*) to be accepted as an experienced player filling that role. These are examples of linguistic and semiotic activity with norms and consequences (see Pietikäinen and Mäntynen, 2009: 26-28). If you cannot speak like *a healer*, you might still be accepted as one because you can fulfill the role. If you are not very good at playing *a healer* either, other players might question you every time you tried to invoke the identity of *a healer*. As Fairclough (2001: 18-19) shows us, however, what it means to be *a healer* is also shaped by the language we use. Perhaps knowing what *HoT* (heal-over-time) means

is not as important as your ability to actually use *HoTs* effectively. Furthermore, what it means to be *a healer* can depend on your context. A group of *WoW* players might have a set of standard that can be contested by other players (for examples on how power must be maintained and can be contested, see Fairclough 2001: 57). Some groups might demand that you must know all relevant terms (such as *HoT*) to be taken seriously as a healer. Other groups might place more relevance on your ability to keep them alive while playing a healer. Similarly, *HoT* might become irrelevant as a game mechanic, in which case it would not be a very relevant part of the discourse of healing in *WoW*. Or maybe more spells start acting like *HoT* spells. The term might come to encompass those spells as well. Consider how *a family* has changed as a word/concept as well (we are more likely to include more diverse families in the definition now, I believe). These would be examples of social (or mechanical) change affecting language use. On the other hand, we must actually call those new spells *HoTs* in our daily interactions and to speak of different families as *families* (instead of using some other terms). Just as *WoW* players are not likely to come up with a new term for *HoT* without a reason, the meanings associated with *a family* would hardly change arbitrarily. For more familiar examples, you might want to think about what one needs to access the Discourses of *a mother* or *a father*. What expressions are tied to those Discourses? How does one convey those Discourses through the language they use? What does one need to be in order to be *a mother* or *a father* (consider different social arrangements)?

Sources and further reading

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Feminist critical discourse analysis

Like discourse analysis, feminist critical discourse analysis subscribes to the notion of language as social activity. Existing practices shape interactions, just as interactions shape existing practices. Similarly, feminist CDA is interested in unequal power relationships, which are the focus of critical discourse analysis in a general sense. If we say that discourse analysis is more focused on studying how language itself works (*this is how games communicate with players*), critical discourse analysis would pay special attention to how unequal power relationships are realized and maintained through language (*this diverse group of people is disadvantaged in several ways by how games communicate with the player*). For instance, critical discourse analysis could consider how existing social

arrangements disadvantage people based on factors like race, sexuality or gender. How many *straight white men* have you seen as comic relief sidekicks to *a woman of color protagonist*? Indeed, women are not the only group of people that is disadvantaged by how many games still cater to straight white men. The above example might elaborate, however, that sometimes multiple issues overlap. If being *a straight white man* is the easy mode of gaming, how about being *a queer woman of color gamer*?

The representation of women in video games is the main focus this course explores mostly because we have to restrict the amount of content discussed during it to a manageable whole. In other words, the focus of this course demands a more specific approach than critical discourse analysis. Feminist CDA answers the course's needs by inspecting unequal power relationships from a feminist perspective (*this is how women are disadvantaged by the way games communicate with players*). As the above paragraph might suggest however, I suggest that you take opportunities to discuss race, class, sexuality and similar issues whenever the opportunity presents itself. *A straight white woman* is hardly the only gamer who should benefit from feminist CDA. While we may speak of women, we must remember that women are not a single, completely unified group.

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Gender

For the purposes of this course, gender is defined from the perspective of feminist critical discourse analysis. To start off, it is interesting to note that one's biological sex does not necessarily correlate stereotypically with one's gender the way a casual onlooker might assume. Even if you look like *a stereotypical man*, you may not identify as one. Indeed, Talbot (2010: 12) calls gender a psycho-social construct rather than associating gender with biological factors. She describes gender as a continuum, insisting that it should not be viewed as a binary system where one either is a man or a woman, masculine or feminine. If you think of *a woman* as a Discourse, you might assume that a person needs a certain skills (for example, how to apply make-up) and how to talk. Physical signifiers like long hair and pink clothes would help, of course? If the above example irritated you, you might be somewhat annoyed to find out that this is the way many video games describe women, from a very flat and homogenous perspective. *A woman* as a Discourse is a lot more diverse than what the above example would imply; the example is simply a type of *a woman* which may be more stereotypical than real. However, if we understand *a woman*

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as a Discourse, it can also be contested (see: Discourse, and Identity). Some people might really think that you have to *dress like a woman* to pass as *a woman*. What it means to be *a woman* or to *dress like a woman* depends a lot on culture and context.

How we understand gender becomes especially relevant when considering gender signifiers in character design (see also: Ms. Male Character). Using definite attributes to mark men and women as separate and fundamentally different entities (e.g. trousers vs. skirts) ignores the fact that gender is ultimately a very flexible concept, with a lot of room for interpretation and variation. Consider the above entry about Discourses. How do you need to use language and other semiotic resources in order to pass as *a woman* or *a man*, for instance? These questions are tied to the view according to which gender can be considered a performance. The concept of gender stereotypes may also be something you want to think about (for example, *girls are better at languages, boys are better at mathematics* or *boys play video games, girls do not*). Note that the examples above are not facts based on biological differences, but cultural assumptions. The latter, especially, could even be considered misinformation.

Sources and further reading

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Talbot, M. (2010). *Language and gender* (2nd edition). Malden: Blackwell Publishers Inc.

Genre

A video game genre is really a mix of loose conventions, not a rigid set of formulae that are replicated in every game that represents a genre. New games take elements from old ones, often giving them a fresh spin. You are probably familiar with game genres like action games, which contain first person shooters (FPS) and fighting games, where explosive action is often the key element. Similarly, you may be familiar with role-playing games (RPGs), where you take the role of a fictional character. Have you heard of massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPGs)? Those are games that can involve up to millions of players, often combining a role-playing element with the massive amount of players online. Gaming genres may also overlap with literary genres like fantasy or science fiction. *Dragon Age: Inquisition* is a fantasy RPG. *Mass Effect 3* is a science fiction RPG (with FPS elements, you might add). During this course, you can attempt to define a game by paying attention to these things:

1. *Genre*, or <u>what sorts of interactions the game offers</u>. This includes the style of the game. If fast-paced action and throwing punches is the most important thing in the game, you might be dealing with a fighting game of some sort. Indeed, this element is likely the reason behind calling a game FPS (a lot of shooting, first person), a RPG (character development, gathering items, a lot of talking) or an

open-world survival game (featuring exploration, avoiding/encountering danger and making sure you drink enough water). Does the game offer sexual interactions? It's already different from games that doesn't, even if they are the same otherwise (think about *Fallout 3* and the gender-specific perks that give you access to suggestive dialogue options).

2. *Platform,* or what technology the game utilizes. A game played on two screens with a Nintendo 3DS is going to be different from a game played on GameBoy Advance. Have you ever played *Dark Souls*? The PC port of the game is atrocious. You really need an Xbox controller to play it, since the game was designed for consoles and does not work well on computers. The choice of platform has an effect on the way you experience a game.

3. *Mode* (not to be confused with multimodality)*,* or how the game allows you to progress through it and how you experience the game. A *linear* game forces you to cross a dangerous bridge because it is the only way you can progress on the map. Likewise, a *linear* story does not offer you many options. Old 2D shooters are a good example of this. Or *Super Mario*, if you do not include those little shortcuts that allow you to deviate from the only route available. A *non-linear* game does not restrict your progress quite as much. The dangerous bridge may be a part of the game, but you might choose to swim across the river under it instead. Multiplayer games are often *non-linear* in the sense that other players may stop you from advancing in the game or help you along (affecting the both story and your ability to move in the game). For instance, someone might be guarding the bridge in hopes of slaying your avatar, or they might have cleared the bridge from monsters just before you arrived (giving you a free pass).

4. *Milieu,* or what the game looks and sounds like. Desolate wastelands, modern cities and medieval castles could be examples of milieu. This is probably where you get the fantasy or sci-fi element from. A FPS game could include monsters to kill, but you might feel inclined to call it a sci-fi FPS if the monsters were aliens. If you need more convincing, think about what kind of atmosphere an effective horror game builds. What kinds of resources the game developers may use to make the game frightening?

The above, also included in central terms and concepts for students, should discuss video game genres in a manner that is detailed enough for the purposes of this course. However, if you want to understand the genre/platform/mode/milieu distinction better, see Apperley (2006). The version I present in this material package is a simplified adaptation.

A notion about the relationship between genre and discourse, however. It might help you to think that genres, like discourses, are based sets of conventions. No genre is permanent and immutable, although you have probably encountered efforts to standardize genres. You could say that genres invoke certain discourses and Discourses. *A western* will likely invoke the Discourses of *an outlaw* and *a gunslinger*, for example, with their own ways of being and using language. Knowing the genre of a text might shape your expectations

regarding which Discourses are in use (and which Discourses are unacceptable).

Sources and further reading

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Identity

Saying that representation and identity are constructed by language and other semiotic systems is the perspective taken by discourse analysis. Thus, while Finnish upper secondary education students have likely been introduced to the concept of identity from a psychological point of view, they might not be aware how discourse analysis (and feminist critical discourse analysis, in particular) views the concept. In fact, students may very well consider identities something fixed and permanent, although many would likely consider that their identities as upper secondary education students are liable to change once they graduate. Of course, having attended to upper secondary education is likely something that stays with a person and how they construct their identity. You might also want to think about the differences between group identities and individual identities. There is a difference between what it means to be *a gamer* and who you are as *a gamer*, although one might affect the other. How you are as *a gamer* will have an effect on how people see *gamers*, but how people see *gamers* might also dictate whether your identity as *a gamer* is accepted or contested. Gee (2015: 106) considers Discourses (which, to him, include identities) a diverse resource one can access. One can be both *a student* and *a teacher* at the same time, for instance, although one usually chooses which identity is at play. You will likely be talking to students as *a teacher* even though you might be learning as you teach. If you are also *a gamer*, your knowledge as *a gamer* could also be relevant in class. Perhaps your identity would seem like a mix of the two if you draw upon your gaming knowledge in class. Just as you can be many things at once, group identities may also be very diverse. For instance, *a gamer* could include (and in my view includes) *gamers* from all walks of life.

So what is identity? From the perspective of discourse analysis, as described by Pietikäinen and Mäntynen (2009: 63-64), identity is constructed by language and other semiotic systems. It is dynamic (as opposed to fixed) and constructed through multiple sources (see: multimodality). Gee (2015: 106-108) gives a similar definition (see: Discourse). For instance, a woman might define her identity based on sources such as her position in her job, how rooted she is in her cultural community (which can be expressed by the language variant she chooses to speak, such as Flemish), her hobbies (gaming), her sexuality and her religion. As such, how women are represented in the media associated with her hobby might have an effect on how (and if) this woman perceives herself as, for

example, *a gamer*. She might feel pressure to succeed and prove her dedicated attitude because women are taken lightly as gamers. Similarly, she might still hear discourses that are opposed to women as gamers – both within the gaming communities she is a part of and outside them. Indeed, other gamers might be opposed to her calling herself *a hardcore gamer*, because they assume *women cannot be hardcore gamers*. It is possible that the woman can demonstrate mastery over gaming in order to be accepted as a hardcore gamer, but one should note that men are not often required to do the same because of their gender. A man could still mix *DoTs* with *HoTs* and many mistakes like that might still make their claim to the Discourse of *a professional gamer* or *a hardcore gamer* easier to challenge (and more likely to be challenged). When a woman mixes *DoTs* with *HoTs*, however, you could even hear an utterance like *well women aren't good with technical terms*. When these utterances are repeated often enough, the Discourse of *a woman as a gamer* could indeed become associated with poor skills and lack of technical knowledge. So if you wanted to pose as a woman online, you could access the Discourse by acting as someone who is not very competent at playing games.

Pietikäinen and Mäntynen (2009: 63-64) additionally describe the role of language in constructing identities, which can be expressed, described and negotiated through language. According to them, discourses build and challenge identities. Gaming, to provide a concrete example, could be seen as something appropriate/inappropriate for a woman depending on the discourses in use. Furthermore, Pietikäinen and Mäntynen define identity as something that is based on one's subjective history and experiences, which is formed in one's social framework. It would, of course, be quite difficult to construct an identity based on standards that are not even known to one. Similarly, a high amount of resistance to some identities could have an effect on how one performs one's identity. To go back to the example above, a woman who is exposed to positive and negative representations of women as gamers might perform her identity differently depending on her expectations and which representation is more dominant in the communities that she participates to. For instance, when faced with gender issues in gaming, she might choose to remain silent about her gender, and define herself solely as a genderless gamer, choosing not to open herself up to critical voices. Maybe she would not be considered a woman in the first place if her gender is not obvious and she uses a lot of technical terms proficiently. Naturally, she might as well choose to openly display her gender and retaliate against the opinion that women cannot be skilled gamers. Or she might choose to disassociate herself from the hobby completely, not wanting the tag (or stigma) of *a female gamer* to influence her identity.

Sources and further reading

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Ms. Male Character

A Ms. Male Character is basically a female version of an existing male character. Make no mistake, sometimes game developers simply take a male character, slap a few gender signifiers on them and call it a day. Indeed, the appearance of Ms. Male Characters is usually marked by gender signifiers (a hair bow, the color pink and so forth) whereas male characters usually go unmarked. According to *Feminist Frequency* (see the resources below) relying on feminizing gender signifies enforces gender stereotypes and the understanding that gender is fundamentally a binary system where men and women are inherently different (as opposed to a spectrum, where people may express their gender in a variety of ways). Pac-Man, for instance, is just a yellow circle with an empty space for a mouth. Ms. Pac-Man is the same with a bow (a hair ornament, not a weapon).

Sources and further reading

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Multimodality

Ventola et al. (2004: 1) define multimodality as combinations of writing, speaking, visualization, sound, music and so forth. For example, multimodal media could consist of writing and music – a heartfelt poem read to a heavy metal soundtrack would sound very different in comparison to the same poem read with soothing background music. As seen in Gee (2015: 56), games are likewise multimodal by nature. In Ms. Male Character, I described how gender signifiers are used to point out that a video game character is, indeed, a woman. A bow on Ms. Pac-Man to differentiate her from Pac-Man would be a visual clue that indicates her gender. Gender could also be conveyed through auditory clues. For example, Ms. Pac-Man could speak with the voice of a woman (stereotypically high-pitched, for example). Indeed, a version of Ms. Pac-Man who sounded like a woman would be different from Pac-Man even if neither of them was named and they looked exactly the same, especially if Pac-Man also sounded like a man (showing how other resources than language can be used to convey meaning).

Ventola et al. (ibid.) feel that texts where considering language alone is enough for analysis are becoming rare. In the above example, the heavy metal soundtrack would definitely have an impact on how the poem is received by any audience. Video games are very much similar. I would even go as far as to argue that it would be remarkably futile to analyze gender and representation in video games without considering multimodal resources. Even text-based Multi User Dungeons have access to fonts (and color) and they

often use individual symbols to form images rather than writing (e.g. a map where *w* stands for an area covered in water). Of course, video games have evolved way beyond text-based graphics and the pursuit of photorealism in graphics practically demands attention when analyzing video game discourses. Ventola et al. (2004: 1) make a similar observation, suggesting that the relevance of multimodality is partly due to the increased level of technology we possess – although their book considers other forms of multimodality as well, such as gestures (which are not, by any stretch of imagination, a modern invention).

The clothes you are wearing, the position you occupy in a social hierarchy, the way your hair looks could all be considered examples of multimodal resources as well. Would it be strange if a game presented you as a woman commanding a group of heavily armored men while wearing bikini armor yourself? No text says that *there was a stark contrast between the bikini-clad commander and her heavily armored troops*. You have to interpret that from the visual evidence. In this situation, you might consider that wearing less clothes than the people around you does not usually indicate that they are your subordinates. Indeed, the kind of clothes you wear carries a meaning (which can be contested and subverted, mind). Furthermore, the context of imminent armed conflict might require better armor, which is often dismissed by many games and made fun of by blogs like *Bikini Armor Battle Damage* (2015). This could be one thing to explain when introducing the *Female Armor Bingo* to students. The *Female Armor Bingo* offers a good framework for analyzing the attire of women in video games. If you want to explore the topic further, I would recommend the article by *Paste Magazine* (2015), included in the list of sources and further reading below. The article discusses how the protagonist of *Assassin's Creed: Syndicate* is wearing clothes that are not appropriate when you consider his historical context and social class. I believe you may find good examples if you read the article thinking about how enacting Discourses requires meeting some multimodal standards (like the clothes you wear in addition to the way you speak).

Sources and further reading

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Representation

Re-present. To take an idea and to present it again, perhaps a little differently than the last time. According Pietikäinen and Mäntynen (2009: 53), the concept of discursive power is largely based on the power of discourse to shape our understanding about how the world works. They note how even a single expression can have power and, indeed, how single expressions (both past and present) eventually make up discourses and the larger network of language itself. *Teachers are good people*. That is a representation. Who said it? Who benefits from it? Who are excluded? Does it match with how history understands teachers? How? What if I said that *teachers are selfish and only care about money*? Indeed, Pietikäinen and Mäntynen (ibid.) note that language is not always a source of power: *sometimes language is a site for struggle*, such as when people disagree on common terms and definitions. What does it mean to be *a teacher*? Who gets to define it? Who benefits from the definition? Considering this, it is relatively easy to see why representation is an important concept for this course. What are women like as gamers? Can women be good gamers? Should women be included in gaming communities? If the students walk away from the course understanding two key concepts, I would prefer those concepts to be gender and representation.

Pietikäinen and Mäntynen (2009: 55) define representation a means of constructing a certain view of a topic and agents who are related to it (see also: Discourse). As mentioned above, it is crucial to notice the relationships between the topic and the agents tied to it. One powerful example is how certain discourses consider women a threat to gaming. In this context, gaming could mean games that men have traditionally enjoyed – especially games with glaring representation issues that would not necessarily cater to female audiences. Game developers have long wondered how to make their games appealing to women as well and there is a strong demand for more equal representation for women in games. However, if women are (in certain circles) spoken of in a demeaning manner (casuals with no skill, for example), it is easy to see why the uninformed male gamer might think that *making games that appeal to women* means making *his games* too easy. *Women are casuals with no skill, games catering to women are casual and not worth playing because I am so hardcore*. Or he might worry that the games he likes to play disappear (the ones that cater to him but fail to appeal to women). These kinds of concerns do little good to women, however, considering how many women are actually extremely skilled and dedicated gamers and how many men are actually pretty casual in their gaming tastes. The division between casual and hardcore players is another problematic area (relating to what games are prestigious to master), but it is hardly the main focus of the course beyond noting that representing women only as casual gamers with no interest in *serious* gaming is a dire mistake at best.

Finally, there is no hard and fast way to tell how a representation affects one's identity. Some people might prove more resistant to outside influences while others might accept some representations more readily. Claiming that a single representation in a single game

has a profound effect on masses of people sounds rather unlikely. Most gamers would likely scoff at the notion of games in general altering people's perceptions as well (although I believe games may sometimes provide valuable insight). When one considers representations in the larger cultural framework, however, one can point out that the representations circulated in video games are often circulated in other kinds of media as well. Seeing one type of representation surface repeatedly might lead to some people accepting them as objectively true.

Sources and further reading

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Textual Intervention

The essence of textual intervention as an analytical method is to take a text and change it. How is the changed text different from the original text? What has changed and how have the changes have altered your perception of the original text? Below, I will introduce four steps on how textual intervention can be used in a classroom, as introduced by Leppänen (2014b) in her lecture materials. The following examples and procedure has been adapted from Leppänen (ibid.):

> 1) Start with an original text. Consider how it could be changed. These are also things that you and the students can pay attention to when making textual interventions.
>
> - Genre: Changing a book into a movie, a news story into a fantasy epic or a Greek tragedy.
> - Context: If the text appears in a newspaper, how would it change if it appeared in a sports magazine or a gaming podcast?
> - Tone: Consider making a neutral news article sarcastic instead or changing a review that praises a movie's virtues into a critical review that picks at its flaws.
> - Style, register: Informal language in a news article or Comic Sans in a master's thesis. Ayup.
> - Aims of the text: Consider a let's play video where the gamer is doing their best to entertain the viewer. How would it be different if their aim was to showcase their gaming skills instead?
> - Properties of individuals: race, age, gender/sex, social position, sexual orientation. These are especially

interesting for analyzing the representation of women in video games. What if the muscular barbarian hero was a woman instead? What if she treated men like one might expect a male barbarian to treat women?

- Place: A story that happens in a big city could happen in outer space instead.
- Point of view/narration: What if the events of a game were described by a very young child instead?
- Expected audience: Who is the expected audience of a newspaper? What if it was written for eight-year-old children instead?

2) When the altered text is ready, consider how you interpreted the original text. Leppänen (ibid.) suggests paying attention to what features of the original text you paid attention to. Once that has been established, consider which parts of the text you altered and what were your aims in creating the textual intervention. How successful were you?

3) Compare your interventions to the interventions produced by other people based on the same text. What remains the same? What is different? What might explain these differences? Are there some interventions that you especially like?

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The Smurfette principle

In short, the Smurfette principle takes its premise from the Belgian comic (and television show) called the Smurfs. In an entire village of Smurfs, there is only one woman, the Smurfette. While other smurfs are defined by their personality traits and hobbies (e.g. Handy Smurf, Lazy Smurf and Grouchy Smurf), Smurfette is essentially defined by the fact that she is a woman (potentially implying that all women are the same). The Smurfette principle is relevant in other texts (comics, movies) precisely because it is fairly common to see a cast of diverse male characters and one token female. The Chick is a related trope that is focused on a smaller band, with a more clearly defined roles.

Sources and further reading

Feminist Frequency (2013a). Ms. Male Character - Tropes vs Women in Video Games.
        https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eYqYLfm1rWA (4 August 2015)
TV Tropes (2015b). The Smurfette Principle.
        http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/TheSmurfettePrinciple
        (21 June 2015)
TV Tropes (2015c). The Chick.
        http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/TheChick (21 June 2015)

Video game

Video games can be basically anything that includes a computerized device, some kind of interface and a player (or several players). I believe it is counterproductive to claim that games played on smartphones are somehow worse than console games, although they are certainly very different. There has been a recent attempt to define video games from a discourse analytical perspective as non-real worlds that people can have discussions with. Sounds complicated? The notion can be simplified a little. Basically, people have conversations with *the real world* by acting. You set a goal and perform an action in order to reach it. Then you get a result. If you reached your goal, that's that. If not, you'll try again or give up and set another goal. You could probably think of similar scenarios in imaginary worlds, but they cannot really respond in the same manner. Video games can, because they abide to rules designed by the people who made the game. You, as a player, get to explore the boundaries set by the game developers and software. Thus, to experience a video game is to experience a conversation with a non-real world that has been thought up by a human (alone or with a team of experts).

You can also refer to the definition of genre (above) for some discussion on how video games could be defined through genres. There are the types of interactions games offer, the platform they are based on, the mode of storytelling and the milieu to consider. There are a lot of games out there and this course is not really concerned about which games are *the real games* or *worth playing*. If you're having fun in a virtual world, there's a fair chance you are dealing with a video game. Games are not all fun and (well) games, though! Some people play video games professionally. You might be interested in reading more about *eSports* and *professional gaming*.

Furthermore, I'd like to remind you that gamers today are a very diverse bunch. Gaming is no longer a hobby for young boys, if it ever was. Indeed, women have always played games, although their role has never been quite as recognized as it is now and there is still so much work left to do.

Sources and further reading

Gee, J. (2015). *Unified discourse analysis: language, reality, virtual worlds and video games*. New York: Routledge.

Central terms for teachers: pedagogical approaches

As mentioned above, this is the second part of central terms that you will encounter during this course, focused on how CLIL and the cooperative learning are defined. I will also introduce some observations about how these methods should be used in class. You might recognize that this course subscribes to socio-constructivist notions on learning and language, but I am making the assumption that you are reasonably familiar with these approaches. For instance: I do not believe in words having pure, objective meanings or transmitting knowledge directly from a teacher to a student – a view which is consistent with feminist critical discourse analysis and course content. Students should be the central figures of their and each other's learning. A section of this introduction to the material package is devoted to your role during the course and it is built upon the above assumptions about learning. You may also have noticed that the central terms and concepts for students' handout includes some discussion on how this course understands language.

Content and language integrated learning

Content and language integrated learning (CLIL) is an educational approach that is aimed at students participating in mainstream education, the level of which can range from primary to tertiary. As the name suggests, CLIL promotes integration of language learning by combining it with a subject matter, which takes prominence over what one might consider stereotypical formal language learning (e.g. drilling irregular verbs in English). During this course, English is the language that is being taught, but English also provides the content (the representation of women in video games) that is being inspected during this course. You might know that CLIL usually combines two curricular subjects, but there is no course dedicated to teaching critical media and game literacy in our national core curriculum.

The fusion of content and language learning is the core focus of CLIL, but there are many ways to go about integrating content with language. For instance, some CLIL programs are very intensive when it comes to the amount of target language being used. In an average CLIL program, it is possible for less than 50% of classroom talk to be in the target language. Furthermore, CLIL programs vary in lengths: short term, high intensity language showers; completing a few courses in the target language and even longer term projects can all fit within the umbrella of CLIL. This course is somewhere in the middle. I would definitely like you to use English whenever possible, in addition to which the course should take approximately ten weeks to complete (assuming two lessons a week).

Although you and the students should use as much English as possible in class, it does not mean that the students should always struggle with English when they are having difficulties. If it is not possible to provide support in the target language, it is possible to discuss matters in another shared language (usually the students' L1) without compromising the CLIL approach this course takes. The design of this course assumes that

you negotiate the meaning of difficult words and concepts with the students in English (or that they negotiate meanings in small groups), but it is likewise possible to provide word lists and translations. Furthermore, it is my intention that this course is taught by a professional language teacher. While formal language teaching is not what this course is about, sometimes you have to pay attention to how language works in order to understand the demanding, authentic examples that are used throughout the course.

It is my hope that the cooperative learning method (discussed below) will allow students to pool their language knowledge. While the students need to be taught teamwork skills to make sure they will cooperate effectively, that is not all the cooperative method can offer to the course. I believe that working as efficient teams also helps the students to work with more demanding language. Indeed, I believe that CLIL and the cooperative learning method are closely related during this course. Teamwork is used both to explore a diverse range of opinions and to make sure that all students get chances to learn language. If you think about a traditional immersion-heavy English classroom, how many students actually get to speak the language? Do you have enough time for everyone to practice speaking? CLIL might indeed improve everyone's listening comprehension, but I believe that the cooperative learning method will give every student a consistent chance to produce language as well. As long as you stick to English as far as reasonably possible, of course.

Finally, I should discuss some of the goals CLIL is supposed to achieve. The following goals have been taken from Dalton-Puffer (2014: 3), who argues for making explicit statements about the goals CLIL is supposed to achieve:
1. Developing intercultural communication skills (i.e. being able to discuss representations of women as cultural constructs with a diverse range of people).
2. Providing opportunities to study content through different perspectives (i.e. hopefully understanding that people experience discourses differently).
3. Accessing subject-specific target language terminology (i.e. DA and gaming terminology, for instance).
4. Improving overall target language competence (by using the target language with authentic tasks).
5. Developing oral communication skills (e.g. through group discussions, negotiation of meaning).
6. Diversifying methods and forms of classroom practice (e.g. by employing different tasks and assignments to reach different learning styles, CLIL itself being something new or different most likely).
7. Increasing learner motivation (e.g. through new approaches and addressing contemporary cultural issues).

Sources and further reading

Coyle, D., Hood, P. and Marsh, D. (2010). *CLIL: content and language integrated learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dalton-Puffer, C., Nikula, T. and Smit, U. (2010). *Language use and language learning in CLIL classrooms*. Amsterdam; Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Dalton-Puffer, C. (2014). Outcomes and processes in Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL): current research from Europe [online]. http://www.unifg.it/sites/default/files/allegatiparagrafo/20-01-2014/dalton_puffer_clil_research_overview_article.pdf (23 February 2015)

Jakonen, T. (2014). *Knowing matters: how students address lack of knowledge in bilingual classroom interaction*. Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä.

Cooperative learning method and grouping practices

Group work conducted during the course is based on the cooperative learning method. As you might guess, the method features a lot of group work, but that is not all the cooperative learning method is. Firstly, the success of the method depends on the students knowing and being taught group work skills. As we saw above, CLIL (as it is used during this course) also depends on the students' ability to compensate for each other's strengths and weaknesses. You have a big role in estimating what skills the students have and what they need to be taught. Secondly, as seen in Gillies (2007: 4-5), tasks and group activities need to be designed with individual accountability and positive interdependence in mind: groups need to work so that every student feels responsible for contributing and that everyone's contribution is needed for the group task to be finished. While the course materials will have some prompts for evaluating group work and promoting interaction, I believe you, as the teacher, are in the best position to observe the students and see where they need help.

Although I want you to negotiate the rules of group work with the students, there are some general principles that this course relies on. Firstly, everyone should be encouraged to contribute and the atmosphere would, ideally, allow the students to discuss their viewpoints without fear of being ridiculed. Secondly, the students need to learn how to give effective constructive feedback. You can introduce them to the hamburger model of constructive criticism: say some good things, introduce the main critical observations and then end on a positive note. People are different: talking about what kind of feedback the students want and are comfortable receiving is also important. This is something the students may not have considered. Thirdly, the students are likely to have very diverse approaches to group work as well. You may have to nudge some students towards contributing more while guiding others to giving more space to contributions by their peers. As you ask the students about what kind of group is a good group and how does a good group work together, you should pose the same question to yourself. What would you like to see? Finally, you should encourage the students to work together in order to overcome language difficulties. It is likely that the materials used during this course will include words that are new to some or all of the students. What should a group do when they encounter a new word? I believe one option would be to ask others if they know the word, perhaps trying to deduce the meaning of the word from the context. Failing that,

one student could look the word up while the others move on, if possible.

Let's discuss grouping practices. According to Gillies (2007: 7), approximately three to four students would be an ideal group size. This material package is based on the assumption of about 20 students, but the reality is likely very different in your class. Based on what Gillies (2007: 7) says, it does not seem to matter how students are grouped, although medium-ability students seem to benefit from being grouped with other medium-ability students. However, since this course is fairly immersive and requires high language competence, you might also want to make sure that low-ability students are grouped with high-ability students, which is something Gillies (ibid.) endorses because it gives low-ability students easy access to support and insights from the group. I believe allowing students to form their own groups or assigning random groups will work as well, though. On the other hand, working with different people every once in a while is also a desirable outcome. It is also possible to ask if any students feel especially confident about a task and use them as specialists in groups (especially in regard to gaming knowledge). Furthermore, you can group students based on gender (either to get groups with balanced opinions or to draw attention to a potential contrast between opinions formed by groups of women and groups of men). There are two caveats: firstly, women seem to get more chances to participate in groups that consist of women or that have balanced gender ratio (a tendency to keep an eye on, if not a hard fact in every classroom). Please make sure that everyone gets to participate, no matter which group composition you end up using. Secondly, a group that consists of women does not guarantee progressive attitudes towards video games. You might find out that there is no contrast. A balanced group of men and women, even if they are all gamers, might have very similar experiences. That could lead to further queries. Why is a group of women saying the same thing about group of women? How do they feel about the topic? For example, if a group of women who are also gamers feels that they have not been harassed online, you might ask them how they feel about women who are harassed. Does that happen? If they say no, you could introduce them to a site like *Fat, Ugly or Slutty* (2015).

Sources and further reading

Fat, Ugly or Slutty (2015). Homepage.
    http://fatuglyorslutty.com/ (21 June 2015)
Gillies, R. (2007). *Cooperative learning: integrating theory and practice*. Thousand
    Oaks CA: SAGE Publications.
Jolliffe, W. (2007). *Cooperative learning in the classroom: putting it into practice*.
    London: Paul Chapman Publishing.

Course structure

This course includes 19 lessons. Each lesson has been designed to take around 90 minutes with no breaks in between. If you and the students come to the conclusion that you want to take a break (in the middle of the lesson, for instance), you should feel free to do so. In that case, it is up to you to decide how to split or arrange tasks during the lesson.

The first lesson is dedicated to introducing the course and its methods to the students in order to make sure that they know what to expect. Afterwards, the course moves from general context to more specific approaches. Lessons two to four cover necessary background knowledge about identity and representation. During those lessons, the students will be introduced to concepts they work with during the entire course. Lesson three should also provide opportunities for all kinds of students to understand gaming culture a little better.

Lessons six to eight are already more specific in terms of focus. By now, you might wonder why the first part of textual intervention (lesson six) is split from the other two parts (lessons twelve and thirteen, respectively). The reason is fairly simple: the first textual intervention lesson is more about general framework related to textual intervention than the actual method itself. Hopefully, the students will have had time to work on their ideas from lesson six by the time they reach lesson twelve.

Considering that the course's final assignment, **the presentation**, requires a lot of preparation, **lesson nine will already cover instructions.** Even if this course is held twice a week, the students should have at least three weeks before they have to deliver their presentations. You should establish a deadline by which the groups must have decided their topics, however. Furthermore, it is reasonable to remind the students of the presentations at least a few times during the course, especially if interesting themes or viewpoints arise during a lesson.

By lessons ten and eleven, which include playing a video game and then discussing it, the students should have access to a fairly large reserve of ideas regarding the theme of the course. Although lesson ten offers the students many chances to practice what they have already learned, lesson eleven also illustrates a new point: the concept of multimodality. The intent here is that you guide the students towards understanding multimodality based on their earlier observations (instead of introducing the concept first and then having the students to apply it).

Lessons twelve and thirteen are, likewise, fairly specific. If lessons ten and eleven are about consolidating earlier knowledge and understanding multimodality, then the two following lessons are dedicated to textual intervention. In both cases, understanding the course's context and the materials covered so far should help the students to make good use of the concepts discussed during these lessons.

In a way, making a presentation about one specific topic is the most focused task the students will engage in during this course. Lessons fourteen to fifteen are dedicated to working on the presentations in class, where the students may also ask you for help and guidance with their projects. It is likely, however, that the students need to work on the presentations outside formal lessons as well. This is also a good time to make sure that each group has progressed with their presentations. If you have not set an order yet, you should establish when the students will deliver their presentations during these lessons (potentially based on the stage of the students' products). By lessons sixteen to nineteen, the students should have finished their presentations (or be close to finishing the presentations, in case it is not their turn to present their work yet).

Finally, the extra perspective section contains a few separate tasks that you can use as you desire. The section contains varied tasks that can be used during different parts of the course or separately (during another course, for example).

Lesson structure

There are some things you should know about the lesson plans that are about to follow:
1. Every lesson is timed so that there is approximately five minutes you can spend for starting the lesson. Maybe it will take a while for people to get seated, maybe you want to warm them up a little or perhaps you are the type of person to start the lesson right on mark and use the extra time elsewhere. I think it is also possible to ask how the students are doing every once a while. You should introduce the day's theme here at the beginning of the lesson. This time has not been marked separately in the lesson plans.
2. Speaking of time, I have not had a chance to test how long it takes for different students to complete the tasks introduced in the material package. The time estimates are rough approximations. You'll make it work. I have faith in you.
3. The tasks usually assume group work by default, but if students get frustrated and want to work on their own as well, you should exercise your best judgment to provide them with a change of pace.
4. Encourage peer assessment and self assessment, especially if you notice that some aspects of group work / content require additional reflection. Using a learning log, introduced directly below, can help with this.

Learning log

This course utilizes very little homework by default. That being the case, it is possible for you to give additional tasks to the students, if you believe it will help them to process the topics discussed during the course. One way of doing this could be by having a learning log. You could have specific questions for each lesson, or you could use some fairly general prompts after each lesson like:

1) What was the most important thing (to you) that you learned during this lesson?
2) Name at least one thing that is still unclear to you or you'd like to know more about.

You could also use this task sparingly after lessons that you think are difficult and require the additional scaffolding. It might be possible to take some time to discuss students' observations regarding the last lesson at the start of a new lesson (which could work as authentic warm up: returning to thoughts and questions from the last lesson before moving on to the new topics). Do not restrict these notions to the course content, either: it is perfectly fine to cover thoughts about language and group work in the learning log as well.

Lesson plans

The following section introduces lesson plans one by one. I have tried to include some relevant background information with every task, but you might sometimes have to refer back to the introduction to this course material package (central terms and concepts, for instance). Each lesson plan will include instructions for students (which you may share in any way you prefer) and instructions for teachers. Your instructions will run parallel to the tasks so that you can find the information you need for each task easily. If any of the tasks include **handouts**, I have included them **at the end of each lesson plan** for your convenience.

Note: many of these lesson plans include links intended for the students. Please do not make your students copy these links letter by letter from a printed handout. You should either offer hyperlinks or perhaps make QR codes (more information: google *QR code*) of the links so that students can access them through smartphones or tablets. Consider the resources and solutions you are going to use during the course.

Lesson one: Introduction to the course

Lesson Objectives: Introducing the key themes of the course. Establishing rules for cooperation. Getting to know each other.

Students will be able to: Work together during the course based on rules they have agreed on together. Students will get to know each other.

Instructions for students	*Instructions for teachers*
Introducing the course, 15 min.	
- Look at **Handout 2**. Keep **Handout 1: Central terms for students** with you for the duration of the course. It may prove useful. - Discuss course contents with the teacher. Don't hesitate to ask if you have questions. - This course will include a lot of group work. How do you feel about that? - In addition to a final assignment, you will receive feedback from yourself and your peers. How do you give good feedback? What kind of feedback do you want to get?	- Introduce the course by name and topic in a general sense. Course language: English. - Give students **Handouts 1 and 2**. You may want to share these as a link and cover **Handout 2** a step by step with students. - Answer student questions based on the materials. You can expand on handout 2's notions by referring to either **Handout 1: Central terms for students** or your own definitions. - Remember to take a look at the handout and to edit the deadline for the final assignment.
Warm up: introductions, 20 min.	
- Taking turns, introduce yourselves. Try to answer these questions: - What is your name? - What are your past experiences with video games? Do you have a favorite game/genre/platform? - Have you ever thought about how women are represented in games? - What would you like to learn during this course? What inspired you to attend?	- Try to give each student about one minute to introduce themselves, perhaps a little more. - You might want to show the task to the students as soon as possible (could be a handout, presented on a screen or even accessible in online materials). It might help them to come up with answers on spot.

Instructions for students	*Instructions for teachers*
Preparing to discuss group work, 5 min.	

• In pairs.
• Discuss pros and cons of group work.
  1. What strengths does group work have, say, in comparison to working alone?
  2. What drawbacks are there?
  3. How do you feel about group work?
  4. Where do you fit in a group? What are your strengths and weaknesses?
  5. How does a good group operate?
	• The purpose of this activity is to give students a chance to work on their ideas regarding group work.
	• You can also address other questions.

Discussing group work, 10 min.	
• Take turns collecting your observations with the entire class. • Your thoughts will form the basis of the next assignment, where you establish rules for how you want to work in groups.	• Listen to what the students have to say. Different groups might require more support with group work and it is possible that some students will actually find it very stressful, in which case you have to keep the students' needs in mind. • Explaining why the course uses cooperative learning: time management, comparing ideas and developing understandings together
Setting up rules for group work, 10 min.	

• In groups of 4.
• Make a list of your observations after discussing the following questions:
  1. What is effective group work like?
  2. How can we get the most out of our group?
  3. How should we work to make our group effective?
  4. Should we give feedback to each other during or after group work? How do we want to handle feedback?
	• Think about how you want to group the students. You could use gaming specialists in every group, think of gender balance or allow the students to group up as they please.
	• You can offer some notions to the groups as well. It is probably a good idea to listen to what the students are talking about, at least.
	• Roles: you can ask the students to take roles (1-4):
	  1. Time management, making notes of main points.
	  2. Presenting findings to the class.
	  3. Encouraging discussion and making sure everyone participates.
	  4. Paying special attention to the topic.

Instructions for students	*Instructions for teachers*
Discussion: rules for group work, 15 min.	
- Introduce the thoughts your group had concisely (in about 3 minutes). - Turns will be allocated by the teacher. **Fun fact:** getting to allocate turns is a form of social power. The practice in your school probably is that your teacher gets to do this. That is why they can do so *in this situation*. And what they do here and now will inform the practice as whole. This is how discourses work - language in use and wider practices influence one another.	- Make notes of good suggestions put forward by students. You can use these to suggest a final version of rules for group work to be used in the lessons to come. - You could make these notes on a screen or a blackboard so the students can see which points have been discussed already. - You can separate the **fun fact** in a more manageable place or to discuss it as an anecdote, as well. Who gets to define the rules for group work is another form of power.
Establishing common rules, 10-15 min.	
- Decide on how you want to cooperate during the course based on everything you have discussed. - It is encouraged that you keep these rules in mind. Not only because you have agreed to them, but also to reflect on what works and what does not work. There's always room for discussion and learning.	- You can, for example, show the students and overview of the topics they have discussed. - This can also be a good place to make some suggestions of your own. You are a part of the class as well, after all. How the groups operate will have an effect on you.

Handout 1: Central terms for students

This handout covers short descriptions of some important concepts covered during this course. I have tried to adopt a more conversational tone in them, and if that makes you question the reliability of these definitions, good (always question *the Man*). What I am offering here are not the hard and fast rules of the universe, but interpretations I have made while studying these topics. This course is all about the interpretations you will make about things like gender and representation (both discussed below). And why is it that we are questioning *the Man* and not *the woman*? Got any answers? These are the kinds of questions you should ask. Simply knowing more about *what is* and *what can be* gives you more power. How to wield it? Through language. It's a long list and it doesn't even cover everything you may discuss during the course. You can give it a glance if you are curious, but it's not necessary to memorize it all. You can always come back to it later. **Bolded** text suggests the term is covered in this list. You'll notice that many of the concepts are tied together very closely.

Casual/Hardcore Gamer

Firstly, you can consider a gamer casual or hardcore. Generally speaking, a hardcore gamer could be considered competitive and dedicated, whereas a casual gamer might be less interested in competition and achievement. Secondly, you can consider a game casual or hardcore. A casual game would be highly accessible and easy to master, a hardcore game might require considerably more effort and dedication. The easiest way to view this distinction is to say that casual gamers play casual games and the other way around. However, it is possible to put a lot of effort in an easy game (that might be called casual). On the other hand, you might play a demanding game by giving it only a few hours a week without really bothering to find out how the game works. Sometimes, even a professional gamer might want to play something easy. The distinction between hardcore and casual games can be harmful for two reasons:

1) People who want to enjoy games are often compared (and often compare themselves) against hardcore gaming norms. Is it necessary to be among the top 5% of players to enjoy a game?
2) There exist a stereotype according to which women are primarily casual gamers and have no talent for gaming. Even experienced gamers may have to demonstrate their skills just because they are women, whereas men get a free pass.

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)

CLIL is one of the key teaching methods used during the course, complementing the cooperative learning method. Basically, CLIL means teaching where language learning is combined with content learning. You will learn English (the language) while studying how gender and representation work in video games (the content). Normally, CLIL is a combination of two ordinary school subjects (Biology in English, for example), but I believe it is important to understand how discourses work and why gender norms and other

common-sense assumptions built in language can be questioned. That is why you are studying a course that combines language learning with a content that is not (yet) found among ordinary school subjects. A few considerations:

1. This course assumes that you use a lot of English in class. A lot of the intercultural discussion about gaming is carried out through English as a lingua franca (a language used for communication by people who do not share a native language). That said, please feel free to use your native language (where applicable) if you cannot communicate a concept in English.

2. With the above in mind, what can you do when you have difficulties communicating? I recommend you work on issues together as a team (see **cooperative learning method**). Negotiating meanings in English and working together to express an idea can lead to more learning. Try to speak as much English as possible. If you feel you've got that covered, try to get others to speak too.

3. This course is not focused on teaching English formally, but you should definitely ask your peers and teacher about the language as well. You will be dealing with a lot of authentic materials and you all might have to work together in order to understand what a text (see **language**) is trying to say.

Cooperative learning method

Like **CLIL**, the cooperative learning method is another big building block of how the course works. The method involves a lot of group work, but goes beyond simply putting you all together in groups. There are three things you should be aware of as a student:

1. *The success of the method* depends largely on everyone contributing and being able to express their opinion. Encourage participation, for **gender** and **representation** are subjects that do not have simple right answers. What is good communication? How to encourage others? How to give good feedback? These and more are good questions to think about.

2. *Individual accountability* is based on feeling that your participation matters and is necessary for the task. The course's themes cover many different subjects, many of which are not easy to agree on. You may have been in a few groups that got the job done without you. During this course, you have access to knowledge that nobody else can provide: your perspective.

3. *Positive interdependence* is an extension of individual accountability. Just as you are responsible for your participation, everyone should participate to make the group to work effectively. It's alright if you don't have something to say about any given subject, but in order to have good conversations, it is important for everyone to pitch in. Many of the course's tasks are designed so that you have time to discuss with your peers. Achieving a good understanding of a topic requires contributions from everyone. Look back at **representation**. If one student in a group of four dictates what you have to say about a subject, there are two to three more opinions that were not heard. Success on this course is not based only on finding a good perspective, but exploring as many perspectives as reasonably possible.

Discourse

Discourse means that using **language** is, in fact, a social action. If you call something hard, for example, you are using language to describe the properties of an object or a situation. Afterwards, everyone who was present to hear your words may come to think of what you described as hard when they hear the word. Language shapes reality. If you call a game hard and everyone accepts it, people around you will likely consider the game hard. Some people in another situation might not agree. Instead of assuming that words have one or two true meanings, you should consider that language is open to interpretation and that one word might mean two different things to two different people, even if the word is used in the same context. If the context is also different, alternative interpretations are even more likely to occur. You can further divide discourse in two categories:

1. **'discourse'** with a small '**d**': language in use in a context. If you call a game hard, for example, you are engaging in a discourse about games. Discourses are units of language larger than sentences, however. *"This game is hard."* is a sentence. All talk about games, consisting of several sentences and participants, could be considered the discourse of gaming.

2. **'Discourse'** with a capital '**D**': Discourses are larger amalgamations of language and other meaningful things, like the way you act and dress. You could consider Discourse a body (what you look like), an identity (who you are and who people think you are) and a tool-kit (what you can do). To be *a gamer*, you might need to look the part and speak/act like a gamer. What kind of gamer did you think of? Do you think that what it means to be *a gamer* has changed? This shows how Discourses (or discourses) are not permanent. They can be challenged and changed. What it means to be *a gamer* might change. Who you are as *a gamer* might not look like the example of *a gamer* someone else thought of. How you talk about hard games could be a Discourse (the Discourse of hard games, for instance).

Feminist critical discourse analysis

You can probably infer that feminist critical discourse analysis is focused on analyzing **discourse**. Furthermore, you would be right if you assumed that it takes *a feminist perspective* on discourse analysis. But what does critical stand for? Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a form of discourse analysis (DA) that is especially focused on unequal power relationships in language. Where discourse analysis might assume a conversation between equals (your standard AB exercise, really) the model for conversation, critical discourse analysis would soon point out that power relationships between people are often not equal. Consider a conversation in *a typical classroom*. Who has the power to allocate turns? Can you think of any other examples of unequal power relationships? I would offer race, gender and sexuality at least (many communicational instances favor *a straight white male*). Basically any instance where a minority is oppressed by a majority. Feminist CDA is different from CDA by being more specific in its perspective: it focuses on issues of unequal power relations, gender especially, from a feminist perspective (seeking to promote equal rights). Consider *a typical textbook family*, which is often a husband, a wife and a child. This is a type of **representation** where a majority has power over a

minority. What you are discussing during this course is only one way to inspect discourse. The field of discourse analysis is varied in both approaches to how **discourses** work and what kind of theoretical backgrounds are used (not all discourse analysts are linguists, for instance).

Gender

Gender is not the same as your biological sex. In a way, you could call gender your social sex, or who you identify as. Notice that even biological sex is not as simple as a division between men and women. Not all men are big and tall; not all women are short and slim. Gender is even more complex. Is every woman you know equally feminine - and what does it mean to be feminine? How about every man you know? Gender, in feminist critical discourse analysis, is seen as a spectrum. There are many ways to be a man or a woman, and some people do not want to fall within that range of definitions at all. Does wearing a skirt make you a woman, for example? Look back at **Discourses** above. Wearing a skirt might be one step into fitting within the Discourse of *a woman*. Is that the only way to do so, though? Hardly. You can probably confirm that just by looking around. Interestingly, wearing pants is not necessarily a sign of masculinity. You can consider phrases like *"Who wears the pants in your family?"*, though. Who is *the Man*? Who is in charge, indeed. Always question *the Man*.

Genre

A **video game** genre is really a mix of loose conventions, not a rigid set of formulae that are replicated in every game that represents a genre. New games take elements from old ones, often giving them a fresh spin. You are probably familiar with game genres like action games, which contain first person shooters (FPS) and fighting games, where explosive action is often the key element. Similarly, you may be familiar with role-playing games (RPGs), where you take the role of a fictional character. Have you heard of massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPGs)? Those are games that can involve up to millions of players, often combining a role-playing element with the massive amount of players online. Gaming genres may also overlap with literary genres like fantasy or science fiction. *Dragon Age: Inquisition* is a fantasy RPG. *Mass Effect 3* is a science fiction RPG (with FPS elements, you might add). During this course, you can attempt to define a game by paying attention to these things:

1. *Genre*, or <u>what sorts of interactions the game offers</u>. This includes the style of the game. If fast-paced action and throwing punches is the most important thing in the game, you might be dealing with a fighting game of some sort. Indeed, this element is likely the reason behind calling a game FPS (a lot of shooting, first person), a RPG (character development, gathering items, a lot of talking) or an open-world survival game (featuring exploration, avoiding/encountering danger and making sure you drink enough water). Does the game offer sexual interactions? It's already different from games that doesn't, even if they are the same otherwise (think about *Fallout 3* and the gender-specific perks that give you access to suggestive dialogue options).

2. *Platform,* or what technology the game utilizes. A game played on two screens with a Nintendo 3DS is going to be different from a game played on GameBoy Advance. Have you ever played *Dark Souls*? The PC port of the game is atrocious. You really need an Xbox controller to play it, since the game was designed for consoles and does not work well on computers. The choice of platform has an effect on the way you experience a game.
3. *Mode* (not to be confused with **multimodality**)*,* or how the game allows you to progress through it and how you experience the game. A *linear* game forces you to cross a dangerous bridge because it is the only way you can progress on the map. Likewise, a *linear* story does not offer you many options. Old 2D shooters are a good example of this. Or *Super Mario*, if you do not include those little shortcuts that allow you to deviate from the only route available. A *non-linear* game does not restrict your progress quite as much. The dangerous bridge may be a part of the game, but you might choose to swim across the river under it instead. Multiplayer games are often *non-linear* in the sense that other players may stop you from advancing in the game or help you along (affecting the both story and your ability to move in the game). For instance, someone might be guarding the bridge in hopes of slaying your avatar, or they might have cleared the bridge from monsters just before you arrived (giving you a free pass).
4. *Milieu,* or what the game looks and sounds like. Desolate wastelands, modern cities and medieval castles could be examples of milieu. This is probably where you get the fantasy or sci-fi element from. A FPS game could include monsters to kill, but you might feel inclined to call it a sci-fi FPS if the monsters were aliens. If you need more convincing, think about what kind of atmosphere an effective horror game builds. What kinds of resources the game developers may use to make the game frightening?

Identity

Is a part of a Discourse, with a capital 'D' (see **Discourse**). This is somewhat different from what you might have learned in psychology lessons. What remains the same is that identity is a highly subjective experience. Who you identify with and who you feel you are can be hard to tell from the outside. On the other hand, other people can give you an identity you do not recognize. Furthermore, there are two types of distinct identities:
1. *Group identities,* which cover what entire groups of people identify with or are identified as. What is *a typical gamer* like?
2. *Personal identities,* which cover who you identify as. Who are *you as a gamer*? Indeed, is *a gamer* even a part of *you*?

What remains constant is that identities, like **Discourses**, can be changed and contested. If you don't know how to talk the talk and can't walk the walk, your construction of an identity might be challenged by others. This is where **personal identity** and **group identity** butt heads: you might identify as *a gamer*, but another group of gamers might not agree that you fill their idea of *a gamer*. Many women are not accepted as gamers before they prove themselves, for example. Whether women get accepted as gamers or not is a form

of social struggle, which is rooted in language. If you are starting to think that the ideas of Discourses (and **discourses**), **gender** and identity are connected, I believe you are right. You might want to take a peek at **representation**. The connecting element? Language, among other things (take a look at **multimodality** as well).

Language

What is language? Is it just textbooks and grammar? I'd like to suggest that language is constantly evolving and changing (see: **discourse**, **representation**). The way we use language is built on how we have used language before. That's why horror is **a genre**. You have enough scary stories and eventually you'll pick up what's common between them and that's a genre right there. Simple, right? Only that language is not a fixed entity. What passes for horror might be up to debate. Is horror the same thing in Finland and in Japan? Are today's horror films similar to the horror films of 1960s? What is art? Are comics art? Art is just a word and you probably know what it *means*, but I don't believe there's an abstract concept (a platonic ideal) of art that's always true everywhere and to everyone. In other words, we use language to define what art means. Are games art? What you include in your definition of art tells a lot about how you view the world.

Texts, in a linguistic sense, may cover much more than just written word. A piece of spoken interaction can be considered a text. Games, can too. Why? Consider **multimodality**. There are other semiotic (meaning-making) resources than writing and speech that can be considered a part of a language. In addition, meaning changes with context. *"Seis!"* does not mean much in England, probably. Bring someone outside Finland *mämmi* and they may not know exactly what they are looking at ("*You're supposed to eat that?"*). If you have a car (or are interested in driving), you probably know that different countries do not share the same laws and conventions regarding traffic. Similar differences exist between people, even those who appear to speak the same language. Dictionaries? Not the whole truth. Can you think of a word (in any language) that is special to you? You might not be surprised to find out that other people don't have access to that perspective.

Ms. Male Character

Remember how I talked about wearing a skirt to indicate you are a woman under **gender**? Well, **gender signifiers** are a thing. Basically, if you draw a yellow ball and take a pizza-shaped slice out of it, you've created Pack-Man. Add a hair bow (or a skirt) on her and suddenly you have Ms. Pack-Man. The concept of a Ms. Male Character further drives home the point that men are unmarked (a yellow circle with a mouth), whereas women are marked (a yellow circle with a mouth, wearing a bow and/or a skirt).

Multimodality

This is where things get interesting. Typically, discourse analysis has been concerned with spoken and written **language**, often ignoring things like what you are wearing or what you sound like. Text, picture, sound, gestures and music are all examples of multimodal resources. A video game likely includes all of the above. However, sometimes *who* is

saying something is as important as *what* is being said. Could you walk in the class and start talking like *a teacher*? If you walk in front of the class before the teacher arrives and say *"Good morning, everyone."* and do so *exactly when the class is supposed to start*, would you be treated as the teacher? You used the correct words, after all. The other people in the class might, however, know that you are in fact *a student* (in their view). You might look like *a student* instead of looking like *a teacher* (what do you need to look like a teacher?). You probably have not received teacher education, either. You would not have the *qualifications* a school might ask for, for instance. Multimodality is much more than consider just how pictures and sound changes a message. In the example, your social status (as a student) might mean that people do not accept you as *a teacher* even if you use the right words and look the part (physical appearance, clothes, how you behave and so on). To take on an **identity** or a **Discourse**, you need a lot more than just words. Words, however, are important as well. Not all language is based on written or spoken words. We assign meanings to many other things as well (from what it means to be *a student* to the clothes worn by *a typical student,* if one even exists).

Representation

It's likely you know something about representation from your Finnish lessons. Think back to talking about newspapers. Who gets to tell the story? Who are interviewed? What is said about people in a news article? It is impossible to cover everything; you must always have a perspective. These all are examples of representation. What you might not have considered, however, is that representations (and **Discourses**) are *built upon earlier representations* and are *influenced by social arrangements* just as much as they, through language, *influence social arrangements*. Gaming, for example, has been a male-dominated space for a long time – yet women have always been gamers, just even less acknowledged than they are today. When you hear about *professional gamers*, people are often talking about men. This is partly because men are the ones who have been considered professional gamers traditionally. Indeed, there exists a study that found that women who have played games for less than seven years had a tendency to think that women are not fit to play video games. However, women who had played games for more than seven years were more likely to trust their skill in *men's games*. Why *men's games*? Because people (individual gamers, video gaming media and so on) have represented those as games that are played by men. Think about role-playing games on PC. Stuff for nerdy boys, yeah? In fact, *PC gamer* reported that in the US women play more PC RPGs than men. How's that for representation? Perhaps *the typical RPG enthusiast* will soon come to mean a woman. It sure could mean that to you now. Not all people have read this particular stretch of text, though (**a discourse**). The same article noted that men still play more *Call of Duty*, which is a First Person Shooter. That doesn't necessarily make it *a men's game*, unless you describe it as such.

Textual Intervention

This is one method in which you can analyze language as it is being used by subverting it. Google *the Hawkeye Initiative* and you will find a good example of textual intervention. Basically, textual intervention is all about replacing one element of language (see:

multimodality, it's more than just words) with another. In this way, the result may allow you to question the original message. *Men are bad at video games and can't handle technology*. Can you come up with examples to the contrary? Why, then, the same phrase about women does not always encounter similar resistance? Similarly, a woman in bikini armor looks fairly ordinary in many games. Make a man wear the same outfit and suddenly he might look very ridiculous (if you do not expect men to look/dress like that). Note that the examples in *the Hawkeye Initiative* go beyond clothes! Pose (**multimodality**) is important too. If you know more about who the comic characters are, you might also know whether these representations feel appropriate considering their personal history. Another example: *"A lesbian cannot represent us as a nation."* What if you replaced *a lesbian* with *a single father*? I believe you might find out that *a single father* would not be any better at representing a nation than *a lesbian*, even if they both are a part of the same nation. Think back on how **Discourses** work. You need to be something that can represent the nation, or you will be contested. All too often, what you are missing is *being a straight white man*. And *the Man* goes unquestioned.

The Smurfette principle

This is fairly straightforward. The Smurfette principle is what happens when you have a group that consists of many different men and only one woman. The men often **represent** different personalities, whereas the only woman has to represent what it means to be a woman on her own. Google *the Smurfs* if you want to see the classic example. You might also want to search for *the Chick* on TV Tropes, which deals with a smaller, better defined group. The Smurfette principle is also featured on TV Tropes, if you are interested. The problem this term illustrates is that men are seen as *the creative one*, *the funny one*, *the lazy one*, *the nerdy one*, *the athletic one* and then there's *the woman*. Pretty shallow as far as representations go, wouldn't you agree? Especially since *the woman* often embodies very stereotypical, feminine characteristics. She may be shallow and materialistic (stereotypical assumptions) and often wears a dress or similar clothes/make-up (stereotypically feminine).

Video game

Video games can be basically anything that includes a computerized device, some kind of interface and a player (or several players). I believe it is counterproductive to claim that games played on smartphones are somehow worse than console games, although they are certainly very different. Moreover, you can have a conversation with *a video game world*. People have conversations with *the real world* by acting. You set a goal and perform an action in order to reach it. Then you get a result. If you reached your goal, that's that. If not, you'll try again or give up and set another goal. You could probably think of similar scenarios in imaginary worlds, but they cannot really respond in the same manner. Video games can, because they abide to rules designed by the people who made the game. You, as a player, get to explore the boundaries set by the game developers and software. Thus, to experience a video game is to experience a conversation with a non-real world that has been thought up by a human (alone or with a team of experts).

Handout 2: Gender, identity and representation in video games, course introduction

1. This is a Content and Language Integrated Learning course. The content (the representation of women in video games) will be explored in a foreign language (English). You should try to use English as much as possible, but it is still possible to use your first language or some other (shared) language to facilitate communication.

2. The purpose of the course is to raise awareness about the representation of women in video games by drawing attention to certain patterns of language as they appear in various texts. Games are multimodal (there's more to interpret than just words: pictures, sound and roles/social arrangements for instance) by nature and it is necessary to understand that a text can include more than just written word.

3. The course will include a lot of group work and is based on the cooperative learning method (see: **Handout 1: Central terms for students**). Your perceptions concerning group work will be considered during this lesson. Furthermore, you should be aware of the fact that this course requires a high level of involvement from you and your peers. Indeed, your observations and discussions will be in spotlight during this course.

4. As you work with your ideas, mistakes and misconceptions are bound to happen. Sometimes, it may even be possible to have multiple different but valid opinions at the same time, considering how the topics the course discusses are open to individual interpretation. You should promote respectful discussion when people disagree. In addition, possible errors should be embraced as learning experiences. Errare humanum est.

5. The course takes a constructivist approach to learning. That is to say, there is not necessarily one true answer to many questions you will ask during the course. Instead, you have to negotiate with each other to come to an agreement. Inevitably, everyone will form their own opinions, which are never exactly the same.

6. Feminist critical discourse analysis is a research approach that provides a framework for textual and multimodal analysis during the course. Basically, feminism provides an angle (discourses will be interpreted/shown from a feminist perspective). You are free to explore your own points of view, of course. Critical discourse analysis is a research approach that is largely focused on language and power and discourse analysis in general considers language as social activity. Discourse analysis contributes the concepts of gender, representation and identity to the course. Moreover, discourse analysis will offer tools like textual intervention (discussed later during the course) that help you to analyze discourses. You could say that textual intervention basically means replacing a selected element of a text with another to see how it alters the whole.

7. The course is not assessed with a numerical grade. Instead, you will either pass or fail based on active participation during lessons and how you conduct the final assessment. ***DEADLINE: fill in here* (Edit! Please refer to lesson 9!)**

Lesson two: Identity and representation

Lesson objectives: Discussing identity and representation. Drawing attention to the students' identities and how they perceive people based on the groups those people identify with.

Students will be able to: Draw attention to the groups of people they associate themselves with. Observe how games and identity may be related.

Instructions for students	*Instructions for teachers*
Identities, mini lesson, 10 min.	
Do you know something about identity already? • In pairs. • Take a look at **Handout 1: Central terms for students**. Spend about 5 minutes glancing at **identity** and **representation**. • Discuss the definitions with your partner. Is there something that is unclear? Would you like to know something more about either concept? • Discuss your questions with the teacher.	• Start by asking students what they know already. You might also ask whether they have looked at **Handout 1: Central terms for students**. • This part is going to be more involved for you: take a look at your definitions for **identity** and **representation**. • You have some leeway in choosing what you introduce, but try to give students a rough overview that they can think about. • **Optional step:** You can also walk the students through their own definitions, perhaps asking them to look at the definitions before adding some insights of your own.
Identities, making a mind map, 10 min.	

• Individually.
• Draw a mind map of the identities you associate with. The mind maps will be used for discussion. Consider the following:
  1. **Group identities:** which groups do you identify with? *A student* would be an example.
  2. **Personal identity:** Who are you as a person? What kind of student are you? What is special to you as a student?
	• Ask the students to make a mind map (using whichever device/tools that allows them to discuss the mind map later in groups) about their identity.
	• They can consider group identities (*gamer/x-year-old/gender etc.)* or other features they associate with (*I am generally outgoing).* If time, they may also see if some of their identities are connected to each other. For instance, a gamer and a cosplayer might find that their group identities have some common ground.

Instructions for students	Instructions for teachers
Representation and identity, discussion, 15 min.	
- In groups of 4. - Discuss your mind maps with each other. - Take a look at **Handout 2** for questions to guide your discussion. - If you have time, you can also cover other questions you can think of.	- Observe student discussion. - Since this discussion is based on the students' own identities, it does not hurt to urge the students to remain polite and understanding of differences. Even if two people see the same identity differently. - That being said, there is room to consider the identities the students associate with and see if groups agree on what they mean and what kind of perceptions different people associate with those identities. What kind of stereotypes do the students have? - It is also possible to consider how knowing a person can change one's stereotypical perception of a group of people.
Identity and sexuality in video games, 10 min.	
- Access the following episode of *Jimquisition* on YouTube. The clip discusses sexuality in the context of *Dragon Age: Inquisition*: - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SGeXzM13TY0 - After/while watching this episode of *Jimquisition*, consider which parts of a person's identity might not be represented well in games (if they are represented at all).	- Before using this video, I urge you to watch it to see if you are comfortable discussing it. I believe it does offer a nice satire on how some Internet users discuss the representation of non-heteronormative sexuality in video games. **Jim Sterling is not exactly holding back, however.** - Alternatively, you could look at articles that deal with similar themes. For instance, consider this article titled *Pandering to the Base* on the website TV Tropes from the perspective of a show catering to people who subscribe to heterosexual norms (a more elusive audience than a devout fanbase the page talks about): - http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/PanderingToTheBase

Instructions for students	Instructions for teachers
Discussing the video, 15 min.	
- In groups of 4. - Consider at least the following questions: - What is Jim Sterling attempting to do with this video? How does he achieve his goals? - Do you agree with what he is saying? Are there some points you would like to draw attention to? - The clip is fairly explicit, for instance. Why is that? - Can you name any examples where games have represented groups of people well?	- It should be possible to display these questions on a screen, for the students' convenience. - If you have a lot of time, it is possible to discuss these ideas with the entire class.
***Far Cry 4* cover and racism, 10 min.**	
- This episode of *Jimquisition* discusses racism in *Far Cry 4*. Access the YouTube clip through the following link: - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jVh02UDiKao **If time:** Use the questions from the previous exercise to discuss the video.	Analyzing texts as cultural artifacts: Sterling demonstrates how people can analyze an image without knowing the framework. While it may not be what the developer intended, the interpretations based on readers' feelings can still be considered legitimate. You can draw attention to this.

Handout 2: discussing identities

Please look at the following questions. Use them as a framework to discuss your group and personal identities.

1) Look at the mind map you have made. Do you associate yourselves with certain groups of people? Which and why?
2) What does it take to belong to a group of people, such as gamers? Are there criteria to consider?
3) Could you name some stereotypes associated with the identity types you have discussed? How accurate are they, in your opinion?
4) Indeed, can you think of how a personal identity might or might not fit within a stereotypical view of a group? Can you think of any consequences?
5) You have heard of representation by now. How would you define the concept?
6) Can you come up with any reasons why representation, identities and stereotypes might be linked?

Lesson three: Women as gamers, Gaming culture and Discourse

Lesson objectives: Discussing women as gamers and game characters. Understanding the larger context of gaming culture. Touching upon the subject of discourses in relation to genre, representation, gender and identity.

Students will be able to: Spot some differences in the representation of women and men in video games. Students will also be able to describe discourses to an extent (developing understandings) and they may be able to connect how genres invoke certain discourses and how discourses are linked to representation.

Instructions for students	*Instructions for teachers*
Video games and gaming culture, 15 min.	
- In groups of 4. - Take a look at **Handout 3**. - Discuss the questions provided on the handout.	- You can connect this task with notions about identities established during lesson two. - You can look at **Handout 1: Central terms for students** if you want some help defining a video game by looking at genre.
Gathering opinions and discussion, 10 min.	
Present the main points of your discussion to the rest of the class.	Every group should have at least two minutes to explain their thoughts.
Stereotypes about women as gamers, 10 min.	
- Watch the following YouTube clip where a gamer addresses stereotypes related to women as gamers. - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0GISjqP6fpw - What do you think about the points discussed in the clip? Is there something you agree/disagree with? Why?	- This video serves two purposes. Firstly, it offers a little change of pace between exercises. Secondly, it should give the students a new perspective that is not often represented in more official sources. - Time the discussion according to how interested the students are. You can also pay attention to points that interest you (perhaps offering them as topics for discussion).

Instructions for students	Instructions for teachers
Women as gamers, reading an article, 25 min.	
- Take about 10 minutes to read this article by *the Guardian*: - http://www.theguardian.com/comment isfree/2014/sep/18/52-percent-people-playing-games-women-industry-doesnt-know - Pay attention to difficult language items. Feel free to discuss the text even while reading it. Discussing the article - You have about 15 minutes to discuss the article after you have read it. - Answer the following questions: - What did you learn from the article? - How does the article relate to what you discussed about women as gamers before? You might also want to think about what you knew about women as gamers before this lesson. Have you found out anything new? - Is there something you specifically agree with/don't agree with - if so, why?	- You can still use the same groups here, unless you think there is a reason to mix things up. - Encourage the students to discuss any difficult parts together. This is a good chance to practice coping with challenging language. Observe how the groups are progressing. - You can also offer scaffolding like word lists or emphasizing difficult words if you believe that would be helpful. - Look at the end of this lesson plan for alternative articles. You might want to use several at once. Alter student instructions accordingly. - Once the students have had about 10 minutes to read the article, they should have at least 15 minutes to discuss it.

Instructions for students	*Instructions for teachers*
Discourses, mini lesson, 10 min.	
- Keep **Handout 1: Central terms for students** handy. - Ask all the questions.	- Look at **Handout 1: Central terms for students**. The most important terms to cover are **discourse** and **language**, but you might want to speak about **genre** and **multimodality** too. - Give the students a summary of the concepts of discourse and language. For example, you might want to mention how certain situations seem to invoke similar voices, word-choices and stances. In other words, discourses. - Compare this to genre and register. If register is a style of writing and speaking, a Discourse might expect you to employ a certain register. For example, how would you expect a Doctor to speak? - You could draw attention to genre as a larger concept. If you are speaking about the discourse of science fiction, I believe you are talking about the ways people use language to make science fiction a genre. The genre itself, on other hand, would be the complete set of conventions. It is not necessary to delve too deeply in the subject. Different people might not even agree how firm genre borders are or whether genre even exists. (I think of genre as a set of conventions, quite similar to a Discourse). - For more on genre, take a look at this - article by *New Statesman*, where authors Neil Gaiman and Kazuo Ishiguro talk about the topic: - http://www.newstatesman.com/2015/05/neil-gaiman-kazuo-ishiguro-interview-literature-genre-machines-can-toil-they-can-t-imagine - It is possible to offer this article to the students as home reading.

Instructions for students	Instructions for teachers
Discourses and genre, a practical, 10+ min.	

• In groups of 4.
• Assign each other the following roles:
  1) A student who records the group's observations.
  2) A student who presents your observations to the rest of the class.
  3) A student who focuses on time management.
  4) A student who makes sure everyone (themselves included) gets to contribute and speak.
• Choose a video game genre. If you are fast, you might have time to cover another genre as well.
• Pick something to write on, whether it is a piece of paper provided by the teacher or an application (consult with the teacher).
• Together, come up with common Discourses and discourses associated with the genre. For example, survival horror genre might have *a grizzled veteran*, who has their own way of being and using language. In other words, make a mind map or a similar list of conventions that are typical of the genre of your choosing.
• You can, for example, pay attention to usual character types (Who are they? Gender? What do they look like? Who do they associate with? What kind of skills do they have?) and common phrases such as *"I have a bad feeling about this."* or *"We should split up."*
	• <u>Material requirements:</u> paper (potentially colored) and something to write with. Illustrating with tablets or similar devices is also acceptable. Consider your options. The products should be done in a way that makes them easy to present to the rest of the class.
	• It is likely that *the students will not have time to present these products yet*. However, *they will be needed in **lesson five***. Using email or some service that allows you to upload products might also be possible.
	• Look at the end of this lesson plan for examples on genres. I also included another handout (see: **Handout 4**) which lists some questions that might help the students to process their ideas.
	• The big idea is to understand how many different factors come together when speaking about discourses and how genres invoke certain discourses. It would be preferred for the genre to be a video game genre, but it is also possible to choose any other source of media the students are familiar with (e.g. literature, graphic novels, movies, music).
	• Depending on how much time you have, you might ask some groups to present their mind maps/lists during this lesson. You can also suggest alternative ways of collecting and presenting ideas.

Handout 3: video games and gaming culture

Consider the following questions:
1) Who play video games? Do you play games? If so, what kind of games?
2) What kind of games are there? Do you have any preconceptions about the people who play those games (gender, personality or something else)?
3) Are there some phenomena related to gaming you know about but simply don't understand (e.g. how can games be considered sport)?
4) Are you familiar with casual/hardcore gamers? Why are these terms relevant (or what do they suggest)?
5) What do you know about women and men as gamers, specifically? The above questions may also help you to think about women/men as gamers. For example, what are women like as gamers?

Alternative articles: The former article titled 'UK gamers: more women play games than men, report finds' by *the Guardian* has some details about what kind of games women play, whereas the latter article titled 'Online gaming ranks poorly as welcoming place for women, states new research' by *Polygon* describes how approachable certain online environments are to men and women. They might be interesting to look at if there is time or if you want to use two (or more) articles. Comparing the articles is a possibility, for instance. Not all groups have to read the same article.
   o http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2014/sep/17/women-video-games-iab
   o http://www.polygon.com/2014/10/22/7042391/online-gaming-ranks-poorly-as-welcoming-place-for-women

Discourses and genre: Below, I will list some examples of genres you could use. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list, although I recommend that you browse the website TV Tropes about the genres you are interested in - the site contains many good examples (including video games):
- Survival horror (Zombies! Well, not always.)

   http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/SurvivalHorror
- Science Fiction (Star Wars might almost be a genre of its own.)

   http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/ScienceFiction
- First Person Shooter (Military? Could be very cartoonish as well, especially in a game.)

   http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/FirstPersonShooter
- Film Noir/Mystery (Myst is a classic, but LA Noir would be a more recent example.)

   http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/FilmNoir
- Fantasy (High fantasy and low fantasy are concepts too - there is variation within other genres as well!)

   http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/Fantasy

Handout 4: Discourses and genre

Although you can definitely have more, you **should have at least two observations** for each of the following:

1) Characters or personality types associated with a genre. If you chose a type of music, it might be harder to point out a character from a song. Some songs do feature characters, though. *If you have time*, you might want to discuss whether you know any songs that seem to introduce characters).

2) Common phrases or types of speech associated with a genre.

3) Common events or scenes in a genre.

4) What is said about the genre? To whom is the genre appropriate to (for example, is there a group/groups of people who can watch cartoons)? Is the genre respected? By whom?

5) What is associated with the genre (think violent games and news, for example). Why? Can you think of any values associated with some genres?

Lesson four: Body image, the representation of women and men in media, character design

Lesson objectives: Inspecting stereotypes about body image and how women and men are represented in media and games. Students get to try their hand at character/troupe design.

Students will be able to: Discuss topics related to body image, identity and representation in more detail. Understand some difficulties (regarding representation) game designers/writers (etc.) might face when designing characters.

Instructions for students	*Instructions for teachers*
Men's standards of beauty, warm up, 6 min.	
• Access the following YouTube video by *Buzzfeed* about men's standards of beauty across the world (in 2015): ➢ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tneKwarw1Yk	• An alternative link to the video: ➢ http://www.buzzfeed.com/eugene yang/mens-standards-of-beauty-around-the-world#.lsKbL0OV9 • Returning to the idea of how representations can saturate all kinds of media. However, standards for beauty do not remain same across the world.
Discussing men's standards of beauty, 10 min.	
• In groups of 4. • Consider the following questions: 1. What seems to be the message of the video? What is said about standards of beauty? 2. Do you agree with the ideals presented in the video?	• You can ask the students to summarize their notions as a class after this discussion, if you feel it would be beneficial.
Women's ideal body types, history, 4 min.	
• Access the following YouTube video by *Buzzfeed* about women's ideal body types throughout history ➢ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xrp0zJZu0a4	• An alternative link to the video: ➢ http://www.buzzfeed.com/eugene yang/womens-ideal-body-types-throughout-history#.ftqV1X6zD • A similar point as in the video above, but with time. Discourses change with time. For instance, different people in different parts of the world will likely understand beauty differently. The same goes for time.
Women's ideal body types, discussion, 15 min.	
• In groups of 4. • Consider the following questions:	• The same groups, probably. Once again, you can take some time for the

Instructions for students	Instructions for teachers
1. The last video was about how male beauty is perceived across the world. What is this video about? 2. Do you agree with the ideals presented in the video? 3. Considering identities and the two videos above, do you think being able to pinpoint certain trends of beauty has any effect on how people perceive themselves? Are you constantly aware of beauty norms? Did your group even agree with the types of beauty the video presented?	students to discuss their notions as a class. • This task should take a little longer to complete because it includes more prompts for discussion (comparing and contrasting the two YouTube clips).
Hollywood fat, an article and discussion, 25 min.	
• You have about 15 minutes to read the following article by *Daily Mail*: ➤ http://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-2229927/Hunger-Games-star-Jennifer-Lawrence-says-shes-considered-obese-Hollywood-standards.html Discussing the article • You have approximately 10 minutes to discuss the article in groups. • Consider the following questions: 1. Have you heard the phrase 'Hollywood fat' before? In what context? If not, or even if you have, what does it seem to mean based on this article? 2. What kind of implications does this have to films? Have you observed a similar trend in video games? What do most video game characters look like? 3. What do you think about how people are represented in media? Is there enough variation and diversity? Too little? Why?	• You may want to use the same groups, or switch the students around. This task is designed for groups of 4. • This should be fairly straightforward. Give the students enough time to read the article, after which they may move on to discussing at their own pace. • You may want to use roles again. For example: 1. Time management 2. Making sure everyone participates 3. Thinking about movies + appearance 4. Thinking about games + appearance ❖ Are there any video game specialists?
Game design, a group of adventurers, 20 min.	
• During the previous lesson, you talked about typical characters in different (video game) genres.	• You may still use the same groups. Ideally, these would be the groups that discussed genres together during

Instructions for students	Instructions for teachers
• Are you familiar with role-playing games? You are about to design a group of adventurers. Think *Lord of the Rings*, if you want an example (books and movies are not too far removed). • First, your group needs a setting. Choose the sort of genre your group appears in. Is it a fantasy group or adventurers, a realistic team of bank robbers or perhaps a team of specialists from a sci-fi universe? • Once you know your setting, take 5 minutes to design characters individually. Make use of your knowledge of the genre: what kind of character is appropriate? • Having finished your characters, introduce your creation to the other students in your group. You have about ten minutes. Your characters are now the main characters of a new game. How do they work together? What kind of audiences would see themselves reflected in your characters? Who would play your game if these were the lead characters? **If time:** you can alter your characters or create new ones to make a contrast. If your product seems to represent a wide variety of people, you could design a very similar cast of characters - or the other way around. What if your cast was entirely Swedish or Indian (Bollywood films spring to mind)?	**lesson three**. • The purpose of this task is to return to the idea of genres and conventions. • Moreover, students might get some insight on how **representation** works on books/movies/games and what challenges game designers and writers face. You can also draw attention to these things during or after the exercise. • Offer multiple forms of designing the characters: some students might want to draw, others may want to make a list or a mind map and so on. Everyone gets to choose their individual approach this time. • There are some points you can make based on the group compositions and what the students have created. For instance, if a group of four men make four gruff male characters who are typical movie protagonists and that is the new protagonist group of an imaginary game, whom would it represent? • The last step is a nudge towards textual intervention. You might want to draw attention to the fact.

Lesson five: Genre and representation

Lesson objectives: Finishing up discussion about genre, representation and discourse analysis.

Students will be able to: Tell how genres may affect representation and perhaps imagine how genre conventions can be subverted.

Instructions for students	*Instructions for teachers*
Returning to discussion about genre, 5+ min.	
- The same groups of 4 from the second lesson. - During the third lesson, you made sheets, mind maps or similar presentations of genres. Return to your earlier work and discuss your thoughts about genre now. - Be prepared to present your chart to other students. - You may also want to discuss the group of adventurers you designed as a case example (of a similar or different genre, depending on what you did).	- Material requirements: notes from lessons **three** and **four.** - If these groups also made the groups of adventurers together during **lesson three**, those products can be used here as well.
Introducing genres to the class, 30 min.	
Present your genre(s) to the class. You can use the group of adventurers you designed as an example to make your discussion more detailed.	- Think about how the students present their notions. Did you give them sheets? They will need a way of showing the sheets to the rest of the class. Have the students' products prepared before the class. - It's quite acceptable to discuss each genre a bit beyond what the students tell. You should have some time in this particular lesson.
Story design, a generic story and genre, 10 min.	
- Choose a genre: it can be the genre you chose before. - Come up with a story that is either typical or at least fits the genre (what does the story need to have to be part of the genre?). - You do not have to write an entire story, but you should at least consider the following: A) Who are the characters involved? Protagonist(s)? Two or three other important characters? B) How does the plot progress? For example, detective stories often feature	- It is possible to use the same groups here. - If you want to use roles, each student (in a group of 4) can specialize in one question, leaving one student to handle presentation and time management (preferably a different student than last time). - If you need to elaborate on red herrings: - http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php /Main/RedHerring - You could also illustrate on how a typical narrative progresses based on a genre that you like.

Instructions for students	Instructions for teachers
red herrings. C) What kinds of problems and conflicts are to be expected? (Consider a simple setup, conflict and resolution narrative structure, for instance - is the story always **linear**? Video game stories might or might not be, depending on the game.)	
Story design, subverting the story, 10 min.	
• Consider the story you just made. Can you think of any ways in which it could be changed by breaking genre conventions? Is the protagonist always good? Could their gender be switched around or changed in some other way? What if the protagonist was actually a hero's sidekick - how would that change the story? • Who has power in your story? What if you gave that power to someone else? • In other words, the purpose of this activity is to stretch your story as far as it goes. When does it stop belonging to the genre of your choosing? What can be changed?	• In the same groups. • By exploring the boundaries and conventions of a genre (by altering them), the students might come to understand genres a little better. What is a genre but a set of conventions, after all? It is possible to alter some parts of a genre while remaining faithful to its core components. For example, a fantasy world is still a fantasy world if it is portrayed in a gritty, realistic style. However, if you combine magic and technology, you might be dealing with steampunk instead (although steampunk does not necessarily require magic and elves • *Arcanum: Of Steamworks and Magick Obscura* is a wonderful game, by the way. Play it. It has a great story. 100% related to the above example. • This activity should also help the students understand textual intervention, which will be discussed in detail in the lessons to come. Furthermore, it should provide opportunities for analyzing how the changes the students make alter the story.
Sharing subverted stories, 20 min.	
• Present a summary of the original and the subverted story to the class. Explain the key points which you changed.	• Each group should have about 4-5 minutes. • Alternatively, if you have a lot of time, the students could act out their stories instead. You might ask them to make very short, stereotypical plays which they then subvert before presenting <u>both</u> versions to the class (context: what was changed). • This is also an activity you could replace with discussion about how group work is going so far. What's good? What's bad? How can we improve?

Lesson six: Textual intervention - part 1

Lesson objectives: Laying groundwork for understanding textual intervention (used in later lessons) by creating awareness about the representation of men and women in video games.

Students will be able to: Pay attention to differences in how women and men are represented in video games.

Instructions for students	*Instructions for teachers*
Representation in video games, 20 min.	
- In pairs. - Choose your method: discussion, a list of adjectives, a mind map, drawing a picture. - Think about the video games you know about (either because you have heard of them or because you've played them). Try to come up with a typical video game protagonist. - Be prepared to discuss the topic with the rest of the class. <u>If you have a lot of time</u> - Consider women as video game characters. What is a typical woman like? What kinds of games she appears in. Can you think of games where women are typically protagonists? Or where women are almost never even seen?	- The purpose of this activity is to activate the students' knowledge about representation in video games. The main question to answer here will be "What is a typical protagonist of a video game like?", allowing the students to discuss their genre of choice. You can also offer additional questions to facilitate conversation ("What is a typical man like in a video game? How about a woman? Who is more likely to be the protagonist?"). - Towards the end of the time allocated for this exercise (about the last 5-10 minutes), go over the students' experiences with the entire class, forming some kind of idea about what a generic protagonist is like. One may also notice **the relevance of gender and genre here**. Does a genre have an effect on who can be the protagonist? - Alternatively, it is possible to present the students with cover art of various games and ask them who is the protagonist (similar aides may help to further discussion especially when the students or you are not especially familiar with video game characters). - Starting from student experiences is based on a constructivist understanding of learning, as seen in Fosnot (2005).
Inspecting women as characters, 10 min.	
- Individually - Take a look at these two pictures in a blog called *Bikini Armor Battle Damage*: - http://bikiniarmorbattledamage.tumblr.com/post/115570134292/itsoktobemar	The idea here is to prepare for discussion later. The task is mostly focused on first impressions and initial thoughts, recording them to make conversation easier. This is one of the few points during this lesson

Instructions for students	Instructions for teachers

ty-submitted-hi-i-wanted-to-share-a
➢ http://bikiniarmorbattledamage.tumblr.
    com/post/115563954409/bloodlusteren
    -submitted-so-i-was-playing-prince
• Make a notes of your initial observations.
	when the students get to practice written
	    English.
	• It is possible for the students to also read
	    the blog posts, especially if they have time.

Inspecting men as characters, 10 min.	
• Individually • As before, take a look at the pictures taken from *Bikini Armor Battle Damage* and make notes of your initial observations. ➢ http://bikiniarmorbattledamage.tumblr. com/post/115365926709/see-the-key-to-sexy-armor-is-not-to-over-sell-it ➢ http://bikiniarmorbattledamage.tumblr. com/post/114653540705/morgan-britt-submitted-can-we-spare-a-moment-to	• An additional resource for inspecting the same outfit between different genders: ➢ http://bikiniarmorbattledamage.tumblr. com/post/103621417001/paperraine-submitted-so-this-is-a-recent-korean • It is acceptable for the students to also read the blog posts, especially if they have time. • The last two links should work as tools for comparison if there is enough time to use all of the materials included in the above blogs (might require extending this task). • You would do well to take a look at the blogs before this lesson to get some background information on the texts that are presented within.

Women and men as characters, 20 min.	
• In groups of 3-4. • Go through your notes with the group. Discuss your thoughts based on the images you have looked at. • If you have time, you can also look at the written text for more context.	• Teacher-given assignment: ask the students to consider how the pictures are different. How are men and women represented in the pictures? Given time, the students can also consider the larger scope of gaming (especially if some groups are particularly fast).

Sharing observations, class discussion 15-20 min.	
• Summarize the main points of your group discussion to the rest of the class. • Feel free to discuss observations raised by other groups.	• Give each group about three minutes. • It is possible to use some kind of visual indicator to make a note of the groups' observations. They could, for instance, highlight parts of the image or simply point at the details they are discussing. • Similarly, the students can write lists of observations - after every group has done this, it is possible to see all the observations made by the class as a whole. Some solutions suggested here may require modifying the earlier task (such as asking the groups to highlight images in advance).

Lesson seven: Feminist critical discourse analysis, gaming media

Lesson objectives: Understanding feminist critical discourse analysis as a perspective. Making observations about gaming media and how men and women are spoken about.

Students will be able to: tell how FCDA is focused on power from a feminist perspective. They will be able to discuss their perceptions about feminism and power to an extent.

Instructions for students	*Instructions for teachers*
Warm up, Tumblr posts about feminism, 10 min.	

• Take a look at the following posts in Tumblr:
  ➢ http://moodydk.tumblr.com/post/118790847170/early-feminists-oh-hey-we-see-that-you-can-vote
  ➢ http://sassy-gay-justice.tumblr.com/post/118567159310/to-the-feminists-of-tumblr
• Discuss your opinions and initial perceptions briefly.
	• You can also use this activity later to go in depth if you want the students to understand the history or the present context of feminism better.
	• The first link should give the students a simplified impression of how feminism has changed, whereas the second link can provide contemporary context (with sources) based on the United States.

What do we know about feminism? 10 min.	
• In groups of 4. • You have about seven minutes to discuss what you know about feminism. What are your initial impressions? Where have you encountered feminism before? • Be prepared to summarize your main points.	• Have you altered group compositions yet? Now might be a good time to do so, if you want to try making the students work with different people. • People are likely to have different perspectives, but it would be reasonably important to point out that perhaps the most recognizable aim of feminism is to provide women with equal rights. Feminism itself is a fairly complicated movement and there are subtle and glaring differences between feminists as well, but aiming for equal rights seems to be a shared goal. If you wish to prompt further thinking, you could ask the students why men should pay attention to feminism or point out that there are issues like the rights of transsexuals that not all feminists agree with. When speaking about gender issues, it is often women who are in a disadvantaged position, whereas men are privileged in many ways. Men and women are not unified entities, however. See: **feminist CDA**. Regardless, you can probably think of a few harmful stereotypes about men that

Instructions for students	*Instructions for teachers*
	might restrict how men can act and feel (showing emotions in Finland, for instance). Similarly, as our understanding of gender develops, it is not only women who benefit from understanding how gender works as a social construct and how people exert power over others by enforcing gender norms (e.g. "You are a woman/man and this is how a woman/man is supposed to be, so start acting like it!"). Simply enforcing that you are either a woman or a man (seeing gender as a binary system) is already a norm that can hurt many people.
Why is feminism still relevant? 15 min.	
- In the same groups of 4. - Seek information about why feminism is still relevant. The link below could be used to illustrate the kind of source you are looking for. Even simple search terms like *feminism + relevant* could produce meaningful results. ➢ http://spicyredherring.tumblr.com/post/116095150574/why-men-need-feminism-too - Discuss your findings before presenting a brief summary to the class.	- Material requirements: everyone needs access to the Internet. At least one access point for each group, but preferably more. - You can look up specific sources if so desired or allow the students to pick whatever they choose. - Internet optional: groups should also be encouraged to think of examples where they have found feminism useful. - Time the activity around how long it takes for the students to find information.
Male gamers and privilege, a video, 20 min.	
- Take a look at **Handout 5**. - Access the following YouTube video by *Feminist Frequency*: ➢ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E47-FMmMLy0 - Use the following roles (a student who...): - Manages time and promotes discussion. - Pays attention to how power works. - Looks at the representation of women and men. - Presents the findings to others in the class.	- You can likely keep the students in the same groups throughout this lesson. - This is a fairly long video. Consider if you want to show it in parts. You can also consult the students. - You could include the questions on two sides of an A4 if you are printing **Handout 5**. In that case, the students would have more space to make notes while watching the video. Encourage taking notes even if you give the handout in some other manner.
Discussion based on the video, 20 min.	
The student responsible for summarizing the key points of your discussion presents them to the rest of the class.	The groups should get approx. 4 minutes to summarize their thoughts about the video, especially about power, privilege and

Instructions for students	*Instructions for teachers*
	representation.
	• There should also be some time for discussion should the class come up with interesting points. This all should prepare the students to tackle textual intervention later on.
	• You can likely return to this task for examples when discussing textual intervention. Make a note of interesting observations, if you believe you could use them later.
Jobs for women and men, 10 min.	
• Come up with 5 stereotypical jobs or hobbies for men and women (total 10). • Compare results between groups.	• If you have time. Can be skipped or used as **a warm up exercise** elsewhere. • Ask whether the students agree or disagree with this kind of division (especially if they do not quite agree with each other's classifications).

Handout 5: male gamers and privilege

The student making notes of power could answer the following questions (or more - it's not a bad idea to make notes):

A) What does the video say about power and privilege?
B) How does power seem to work here?
C) What is the relationship between power and gender here?

The student making notes of representation could answer the following questions (or more - you really should make some notes):

A) What does the video say about the differences in the representation of women and men in video games?
B) Why do the speakers keep drawing attention to their gender? What do they hope to accomplish?

Lesson eight: The representation of women in video games

Lesson objectives: Discussing gender and representation in games. Introducing the students to the female armor bingo.

Students will be able to: Read and use the female armor bingo as an analytical tool. Spot inconsistencies between the representation of women and men in video games.

Instructions for students	*Instructions for teachers*
Representation and sexualization, 15 min.	
- In groups of 4. - Take a look at the following blog post by *Bikini Armor Battle Damage*, detailing differences between realistic, idealized and sexualized representations in video games: ➢ http://bikiniarmorbattledamage.tumblr.com/post/108645564152/our-own-revised-version-of-this-that-chart - Discuss the following points: - What is the message of this image? - Have you encountered similar representations in video games? Can you give concrete examples? - Consider genre: are there games where sexualized representations of characters are rare? Who is the target group in those cases? Is the target group always the same? - On the other hand, who benefits from sexualized representations? Why do they exist? If time, discuss sex shaming - Have you ever heard of slut shaming? Although you might want to speak of **sex shaming** instead, considering that *slut* is basically an insult that degrades many kinds of women. You can probably think of examples on when female sexuality is policed in almost any context. - Is it alright to police how women dress? Should the clothes worn by men be policed in a similar fashion? Why, why not? - I'm going to make an argument here: there are times when a character can be highly sexual and fit the context. Can you think of examples when it is **not** the case, however?	- This picture should work no matter how you show it to the class (or whether the students access it from their own devices or not). - It is also possible to look at the written text, if time allows (or if simply studying the picture yields no topics for discussion in groups). - Ideally, the students would realize that while men are indeed represented as something different than "the average" (if such even exists), they are not usually sexualized in games the same way women are. - Understanding that these representations are usually heroically idealized (and that women can be heroically idealized as well) is likely paramount for men to understand how sexualized women are different from heroically idealized men. The sexualized male character in the chart is from the Final Fantasy series; his outfit made many (presumably male) fans cry out while similarly sexualized outfits are not at all uncommon with the series' female characters. - Additional sources, **sexualized men**: ○ http://bikiniarmorbattledamage.tumblr.com/post/116027625310/so-the-official-explanation-for-why-samus-got-her ○ http://bikiniarmorbattledamage.tumblr.com/post/116008420023/princesofpowerofficial-prince-placere-bio-and ○ http://bikiniarmorbattledamage.tumblr.com/post/115940109447/so-there-is-such-thing-as-too-sexy

Instructions for students	Instructions for teachers
Why do you think so? • Turns out there is a sort of related blog post you might want to take a look at/discuss: ➤ http://heckabucky.tumblr.com/post/121777156138/man-teenaged-girls-arent-allowed-to-have-a	• The purpose of the **if time** activity is to point out that sexualized attires are not always bad. You might also point out that there is a differences between how a character is **designed** (on purpose) and how a person chooses to express themselves. To reiterate: sex=bad is *not* the message here. Bikini armor in snow, though? Women as sexy accessories next to professional men? Now we're talking.
Introducing the Female Armor Bingo, 15 min.	
• In groups of 4. • Spend some time familiarizing yourselves with the following blog post by *Bikini Armor Battle Damage*: ➤ http://bikiniarmorbattledamage.tumblr.com/post/78258766632/female-armor-bingo • Discuss the elements of the *Female Armor Bingo* with your group. Are there squares the meaning of which you do not understand? Can you mention examples that might fit the squares, based on the games you know? • You are not completely on your own. The accompanying blog post comes with some explanations on how the *Female Armor Bingo* should be used, including the author's notes on copyright. If time, explore at your leisure.	• Material requirements: Everybody could benefit from having access to the Internet. Technically, **you are not allowed to print copies of the *Female Armor Bingo* without asking permission first**. Read the accompanying blog post for more information. • You should also tell the students that this sheet can be used as a tool for analyzing visual elements of video game character design. It has many potential flaws that are repeated in many designs. Furthermore, *the implied problem is not with a woman wearing revealing clothes*, but a woman being portrayed in revealing clothes in a situation where revealing clothes are not a sensible option (especially when you are wearing armor that is supposed to protect you from attacks). This is especially problematic when men get serious armor but women do not. See the **if time** part above.
Using the *Female Armor Bingo*, 30 min.	
• In groups of 4. • Look at the images presented to you. Use the *Female Armor Bingo* to spot common elements of sexualized character design. • Discuss your choices and interpretations with the group. <u>After analyzing the images</u> • Discuss the following points: 1. What strengths and weaknesses does	• If you want to, you could mix the groups to get slightly different perspectives on how the *Female Armor Bingo* works in each group. • I will provide two examples here, but you should feel free to choose your own examples or even allow the students try the bingo on characters they already know. • It would be wise to show the students these pictures without the filled bingo charts first.

Instructions for students	Instructions for teachers
the Female Armor Bingo have? 2. How did it feel like to use the bingo as an analytical tool? 3. Do you agree with the bingo as it was filled in the blog? Why? Why not? 4. What do you think about Bikini Armor Battle Damage as a blog in itself? What is it about? How do you feel about the point the blog is making?	• The students should look at each example for at least ten minutes (although less or more is possible, if you want to introduce more examples or concentrate on something specific). Discussion should be encouraged. • **Copyright:** you are allowed to show examples from web pages (as long as there are no moving pictures) during a lesson. • This tool can be used in **lesson ten** and in the final assignment (**presentation**), so make sure the students understand it well enough. It is possible to ask questions later as well, but it doesn't hurt to point out that they will see this bingo chart again in the immediate future.
Out of context heroes, role-playing, 15 min.	

• In pairs.
 • Have you ever role-played? You are about to. This task is similar to improvisational theatre or an improvised A-B exchange, if you will. Well, that sounded dull. Let's stick with improvisational theatre.
 • **Scene:** a fictional hero meets an ordinary, very real person (think more normal than normal). See **Handout 6**.
 • Take turns. You need to fill 2 roles:
   1. A hero, whose design is taken from a game. Possibly one of the heroes you have seen during this lesson.
   2. An ordinary person, who views the world more or less like an *average person*. Very square, normal and unsurprising.
 • Play at least two rounds so that each of you gets to be the hero and the ordinary person.
 • Bold experimenting: highly encouraged.
	• Splitting the earlier groups would probably be the fastest way to proceed.
	 • You can also use this exercise as a warm up elsewhere, if you (for example) want to dedicate more time for discussing group work.
	 • Scaffolding: **Handout 6**. You should familiarize yourself with this task so that you can offer reasonably quick answers.
	 • It bears repeating that the purpose of this exercise is to make the students bring a fictional hero into a real situation. Suddenly, all the things we take for granted have to be explained/can be questioned by the ordinary person.
	 • Ideally, the students should have freedom to experiment, but **scaffolding may be necessary to get the exercise moving**. You could give the students a concrete scene, like a hero who usually dresses up in showy clothes having to stalk a suspect at a bus stop and a random stranger starts making small talk.

Group work, impressions and discussion, 10 min.	
• In groups of 4. • Discuss: 1. What are your impressions of group work so far?	• Make groups of 4 from the pairs. You can use established groups (rapport) or new groups (new perspectives). • Take about 6-7 minutes to discuss the

Instructions for students	Instructions for teachers
2. What is working well? Have you been able to benefit from group work? 3. What needs to be improved? What improvements would you make? Are there some skills you'd like to develop together, for example? 4. Reflect on the rules you agreed on. Have they served you well?	students' impressions about group work in the groups they have been working with. It's possible that some thoughts have come up even before this point (**and it's possible to use this task earlier/more often**). • Spend the rest of the time talking about the students' observations together with the class. Try to address any issues that arise together but also make note of things that work and seem beneficial.

Handout 6: role-playing: more information on the setting

Take turns playing *a hero* (whose design is taken from a game) and *an ordinary person*. You are free to choose who *the hero* and *the ordinary person* are. The goal here is to improvise a stretch of conversation between the two in a scene of your choosing. The only restriction for the scene is that it should be an ordinary interaction (small talk at a bus stop, visiting a grocery store, etc.). **For example, think of a hero who is supposed to shadow someone by sitting at a bus stop, where the ordinary person starts making small talk.** How would the hero fare in Finland if it was cold and snowing? Would they stand out or be bothered by the weather? **The ordinary character should assume so.** Basically, the aim of this task is to experiment how some of the character designs discussed during the lesson/chosen by you would *fare in universes that do not take them for granted*. You can actually encounter some lampshading in situations like this (in games and comics, for example), where a hero could show up in the North Pole wearing nothing but shorts and answer *"I don't get cold"* to an explorer's query (assuming they're there to save some sensibly equipped explorer or something - go figure. It's your story. You're in charge here.). If that is not possible, how do you react to the situation? Will *the hero* conform to the norms? How would they have to change? Be ready to act this out.

It bears repeating that the purpose of this exercise is to bring a fictional hero into a real situation. Suddenly, all the things we take for granted have to be explained/can be questioned by the ordinary person. Many women, for instance, are portrayed in clothes that would be very cold to wear - that could be something to pay attention to. How would you dress up a commander of an army before she or he is about to address her or his troops? What kind of clothes/armor would convey status and respect? Have the ordinary person really stick to what is ordinary and expected and react to the unexpected or things that do not make sense from their perspective.

Lesson nine: Preparing for the final assignment

Lesson Objectives: Preparing for presentations. Giving instructions for the course assignment. Establishing groups.

Students will be able to: Work as an efficient team to make the presentation.

Today's agenda: ***DEADLINE*** This non-obtrusive marker indicates that you should come up with a deadline by which the students should have locked in their topics (and confirmed them with you). Try to set the deadline reasonably early so that the students have a lot of time to work on their presentations (possibly before the course starts). That said, it will likely take some time for them to come up with a topic. You may want to ask the students how they feel about their topics by the end of this lesson to get a feel about how many groups are already prepared to choose theirs. **This is the lesson where you should repeat the deadline to the students while setting up.**

Instructions for students	*Instructions for teachers*
Course assessment, presentations, intro, 20 min.	
• See **Handout 7**. • Ask all the questions.	• Please refer to **the last lessons** included in the course materials for more details about the structure of the presentations. It is possible to hand out these details to the class already. • Walk the students through the handout. • Remember the deadline. It's best to get things moving as soon as possible. • Of course, assessment of the presentations should reveal if the approaches chosen by the students worked, but there is something to be learned from attempts that did not quite work as intended. You should, however, guide the students towards an approach that will give them a sense of accomplishment (and something that can be covered during 25 minutes - it is likely necessary to keep the topic reasonably focused). • The students could, for example, pick a game of their liking and spend five minutes giving the other students context (telling, showing a clip etc.). Having done that, they could show the class *Female Armor Bingo* charts, which would take some time to discuss. Once

Instructions for students	Instructions for teachers
	everyone has observed the images the group presents, the students can then discuss their analysis and the team responsible for the presentation can show their own card with explanations. Hopefully, their presentation would include notions how women are presented as characters and how they understand/interpret those representations and their effects. • Ultimately, any presentation structure fine as long as the students illustrate their topic clearly and are able to discuss themes that are central to the course. • It is also possible to give the students some time to discuss the task among themselves (which might help the students to come up with questions once they have had a chance to consider the task). Reading the handout should take a while.
Grouping, practical considerations, 10 min.	
• Individually • Take a moment to consider how you would like to be grouped. • Be prepared to discuss with the teacher.	• You could insist on new groups of relative strangers to give the students a chance to practice teamwork with people other than their friends. • The students could be grouped so that there are women and men in every group and/or that there is a gaming expert in every group, if applicable (leading to more balanced views, hopefully). • It is also possible to record student interests and assign groups based on that. Of course, you might allow the students to choose their own groups, if you feel that it is the best alternative.
Established groups, agreeing on rules, 20 min.	
• Discuss: 1. Are there any special areas of responsibility that can be divided at this point? 2. How will the group communicate?	• Add deadline to the instructions. • Have the established groups discuss on how they want to work on the final assignment. • They will probably have to meet out of

Instructions for students	Instructions for teachers
When and how will you work to make the presentation happen? What channels of communication are you using? For example, how soon do you expect emails to be answered? 3. Is there some specific aspects about the representation of women in video games you are already interested in? 4. How do we proceed from here? How can we make sure we have our topic ready by ***DEADLINE***? What will we do once we have established the topic?	class. • You can mention that the two lessons before the presentations are intended for working on the presentations in class. Every group should have started before then, though. • Fast groups could already start talking about what a good presentation is like. The topic might come up before, too. Make sure they know how they're going to proceed before giving them additional things to think about.
What is a good presentation like? 15 min.	
• Consider the following: 1. What makes a good presentation? How should a good presentation be conducted? 2. Indeed, what is the purpose of a presentation? What are you going for? 3. Are there some specific styles of delivery you all agree on, for instance? 4. Can you identify some important parts each presentation should have?	• In the same groups as before. You can always offer some professional insight and scaffolding to help the students along. • It is also possible to look at examples of presentations.
Presentations, rounding up observations. 15 min.	
• Present a summary of your thoughts to the rest of the class.	• Each group has about three minutes to tell what makes a presentation good in their opinion. You or a student can keep track of all features of a good presentation that come up in order to form a cohesive picture. It is possible to discuss whether the class agrees with the result. • **Alternative assessment:** a rubric for assessing presentations will be provided under the last lessons where the presentations are conducted. **However, if you and the students have some good discussion about**

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Instructions for students	Instructions for teachers
	presentations here, you could use the students' observations as basis for assessing performances. In this manner, you can give the students a better understanding of the principles they are using to assess presentations. Furthermore, this could give the students a greater sense of ownership over their own learning (as they get to discuss and form the assessment criteria). • **If there is still time**, you can let the students to brainstorm together. Alternatively, you could include an additional task here.

Handout 7: course assessment, presentations

Basics

- The course is not graded, but the presentations you make are one of the few formal methods of assessment used during the course.
- The aim of the presentations is to demonstrate understanding one or more aspects of representation/gender/identity in video games that you have encountered during the course or want to discuss. It can be focused on games, characters or people or a combination.
- You should work in groups of 4, ideally. Negotiate with your teacher if you feel that another arrangement is desirable.
- Each group has 25 minutes to present their topic, after which there will be 20 minutes for feedback and discussion about the presentations. Your presentations may include a practical portion that takes about 10 minutes, but it is optional. Original ideas are always great, though!

Topic
As long as the presentation is related to the representation of women (or men) in video games, any topic/approach should be allowed (as long as it seems feasible). You can also discuss women as gamers, of course. Discussing race and sexuality is acceptable, too. Example topics could include (but are not limited to):

- Examples of how women are represented in a game/several related games. The focus would be on what the game/games say about women in general and what tools the games use to deliver the message.
- One central character in a game or several related games (e.g. Commander Shepard in the *Mass Effect* series). Here, you may want to concentrate on how language and other resources are used to construct a complete representation of a character.
- How women are seen as gamers in gaming-related media. What kind of language is used to describe women? Who uses this language?
- Comparing the representations of women and men in games. Here, the attention can be on multimodal resources: appearance/role in the story or game universe/dialogue and so on.
- Ambitious but doable: you could, for instance, take a few simple examples and interview other students (who may not be taking the course) about how they feel about the examples. The results could then be discussed in class. In this case, it is important to keep answers anonymous (and you should tell the students why you are interviewing them - research ethics).
- Similarly, you could come up with something new about representation/identity, in case you are familiar with the topic already (by following a blog or being interested in research). If you feel inclined to share a new point of view, there is no reason

why your group could not teach the class a new concept or way of looking at games. By default, though, it is best to keep things simple and straightforward - a clear focus should make the task manageable.

While you do not have to make a bibliography and use academic language when presenting your findings, *you should either present a list of your sources* **or** *present your sources with the examples you are discussing*. In practice, almost any kind of source can be relevant if it is discussed critically. Most of your actual examples should come from games, but it is also acceptable to use Let's Play videos (whether they are commenting the game or the player's statements), trailers or promotional materials.

- Do you have any questions about these instructions?

Lesson ten: Observing video games (a practical)

Lesson objectives: Practical observation of video games by playing one.

Students will be able to: Use the female armor bingo as an analytical tool. Spot inconsistencies between the representation of women and men in video games.

Before the lesson: It's likely necessary to indicate that this lesson will be held in a separate location if the students don't have access to their own devices. <u>Give students **Handout 8** reasonably early so that you can discuss arrangements with them.</u> **Before this class** (or hilarity ensues).

The entire lesson
- This part varies a lot based on what devices are available and which games are played. Ideally, every student gets to play something. It is possible that the students work in pairs or even groups of four with one game, but it is likely more fun if the students get to play together. If groups wish, they can take a look at multiple games or simply focus on one game, played by every student.
- **The task** is to make notes of the representation of women in video games. You should encourage the students to use the *Female Armor Bingo* discussed in **lesson eight** as an analytical tool, but there are many aspects (e.g. voice, story) that it does not cover (a fact you may have discussed when considering the strengths and weaknesses of the Female Armor Bingo).
- Basically, you have to tailor this exercise to suit the needs of their class, but the idea is that the students get to spend one lesson playing a game and actually observing how women are represented in that game.
- It is also possible to alter group compositions based on the games people want to play. In that case, a group of 4 or 5 could skip the lesson and instead play one or two matches of *League of Legends* together without having to install the game on another computer. Alternatively, a group of friends (new or old) might want to converge at a student's home to play a game together. Both alternatives are possible, if the students are willing. Otherwise, you should attempt to arrange some sort of opportunity to play a game through the resources available to them.

Handout 8: gaming resources

These are examples of the questions you might think of while playing:
1) Pay attention to the representation of women and men in the game of your choice. Are they equal? What is different?
2) You can analyze visual elements based on the *Female Armor Bingo*. What else is there to analyze? How do these features factor to the representation of the character? Are they relevant?
3) Are the features you observed related to gender somehow? Can you point at some evidence which suggests how a character's representation is tied to their gender?

What follows is a list of a few games that you might get to play during **lesson ten** (consult with the teacher). If you have a game that you can access in mind, feel free to suggest it to the teacher. Note: installing a game to a school computer may require some additional tweaking - find out preferably before the class. Consider what resources you have available to you. Platforms? Time?

Ask other students: If you have access to, say, Nintendo Wii and some iteration of *Super Smash Bros.* - well, I'm saying you should go for it! If you can make the time, it is possible to arrange this lesson at someone's home (make sure to check that everyone can make it).

League of Legends: Or similar team-orientated games that have fairly diverse casts. It is possible to make notes of how characters play, what they look/sound like, what kind of story they are given and so forth. The game also features unique background stories for each character and it is possible to account for them in your analysis. League of Legends requires a pretty hefty installation, but a group of four (four groups of five for full teams) would likely have fun trying the game. At the moment of writing, it is fairly popular and there is a chance there are experts in the class (you could play together, too). If you know *LoL*, you probably know other similar games too. They're all good for the purposes of this lesson.

Sleuth: A browser game, which makes it fairly accessible without prior tweaking. Sleuth is a detective role playing game which draws upon detective story/noir genres. Perhaps a good option for studying how genre and representation are tied (what seems to be common to this genre, is there something subversive?).

Clash of Clans: In case you have access to a tablet, there are many free to play games that should be fairly easy to access and play. Clash of Clans is notable because it is a Finnish production, but the students will likely have their own favorites if they have access to tablets. Strategy-driven, the representation of women will likely be in a very minor role in this game. At best, one could make note of specific units and descriptions.

Fallout Shelter: is a similar free to play game. It should be possible to take a look at how outfits work and how the game handles race.

Other solutions are also possible, depending on resources available to you. Even a Facebook game like **Bubble Witch Saga 2** has some representation in it, although in that case you might find relatively little to discuss. On the other hand, the limited amount of things to analyze might provide a clear focus. Basically, character and story driven games are usually a little better for analyzing representation (depth and breadth of content), but they are hardly the only choices available.

Lesson eleven: Games and multimodality, discussing observations

Lesson objectives: Discussing observations. Understanding the multimodal nature of games.

Students will be able to: Discuss observations made while playing a game. They will be able to draw attention to multiple sources of information (narratives, visual cues, audio cues etc.).

During the lesson: This lesson should lead the students towards understanding the concept of multimodality (which you will sum up towards the end of the lesson - you can find details about multimodality in the central terms). Since the students have not been explicitly taught what multimodality means, it is partially up to you to draw attention to the points the students raise during the class. You may also have to ask some questions in order to make the students think about games as more than moving pictures. Some resources will be provided below.

Instruction for students	*Instructions for teachers*
Multimodality and genre in practice, 15 min.	
- Individually - Access the following YouTube clip by *Vegan Black Metal Chef*. You will see (and hear) a recipe: - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zT _ZCP78VxY Once done - Reflect on how the recipe was made different by the author's use of multimodal resources and breaking of genre conventions.	- Start by asking the students what a typical food recipe sounds/looks like. Can they improvise an example? Spend a minute or two here, just to prime the students. - Having done that, present them with the instructions. - Once the students have seen the clip, you can let them talk among each other (in pairs or small groups) before asking the class to discuss their thoughts.
Games and multimodality, preparation, 15 min.	
- Form groups with the students you played a game with during the last lesson. - Take a look at your notes. Think about what you can tell to the rest of the class. What kinds of representations did the game offer? What resources did the game use? - Take a look at **Handout 8**. - Be prepared to discuss your findings.	- The purpose of this exercise is to prepare the students. They should be able to present and discuss their findings in greater detail during the next exercise. - There's no need to spend more time here than what the students need, though.
Games and multimodality, discussion, 25 min.	
How did representation work in the game you played? Summarize your findings.	In the interest of highlighting multimodality, you could ask a few questions from the

Instruction for students	*Instructions for teachers*
• Pay attention to the kinds of resources the game used to convey a message.	groups if they seem to be focusing on only one or two aspects of representation. • If a group talks a lot about how a character looked like, you could ask how they sounded like or what kind of dialogue they were given. • If they draw attention on visual/auditory clues, talk about social arrangements and behavior.
Multimodality, mini lesson, 10 min.	

• Language conveys meaning in context, **discourse** can literally be seen as <u>language in use</u> in context.
• The concept of multimodality expands the notion of language to cover more things than just speech and writing.
• Examples of multimodality include:
   1. Visual cues (appearance, clothes)
   2. Sound (a creaky bridge, tone)
   3. Social arrangements
      a. A woman as a protagonist.
      b. A woman as a damsel in distress.
      c. A woman as background decoration.
      d. A woman as a world leader.
• You can combine these resources to form Discourses (language + other stuff = meaning). Think of the above resources and combine them with the Discourse of *a billionaire*, for example. What do they look like? Gender? Position? Ways of speaking? Associated hobbies and identities?
	• You can find more details about multimodality in the central concepts section of the course material package. You can also remind the students about **Handout 1: Central terms for students** as well.
	• Ideally, you should have a plenty of examples to draw upon here. After all, the students have just given their observations about the games they played. It is important to illustrate here that representation can be more than just appearances.
	• Multimodality in gaming could be related to how a character appears in a game, what they sound like, what position they are given in the game's context (a woman as a protagonist, a woman as a damsel in distress, a woman as a world leader in a fictional universe and so forth - social arrangements can also be considered multimodal resources).
	• To keep things simple, you should at least draw attention to visual cues, auditory cues and social arrangements. It is also possible to discuss dialogue (how the characters come across and what kind of knowledge they are given, for instance).
	• Multimodality can be hard to analyze, but you should keep in mind that it is not always necessary (or possible) to know what the author intended. Regardless, it is still possible to analyze things like images (even the use of color) based on how the students interpret the text and what meanings they assign to what they experience. The

Instruction for students	*Instructions for teachers*
	students might, likewise, need to be reminded that how they experienced and interpreted a text is not necessarily what the author intended (especially if they make comments about what the author has intended).
Games, multimodality and conventions, if time.	
- In groups of 4. - Consider what happens when you change some aspects of a game. You can refer to **genre** in **Handout 1: Central terms for students**. For instance, what would happen if relatively serious like Call of Duty was presented with cartoon graphics and sound effects (*milieu*)? How would that change the game? - Access the following YouTube clip for a possible example: - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IFgIqn4bNfo - If there is a lot of time, you could compare the above trailer with this trailer for *Bloodborne*: - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G203e1HhixY	- You can use the same groups. Especially if there's not enough time to switch groups. - It is possible to use this task later during this course, if will not have enough time now. **If you suspect there is enough time to watch both trailers and to discuss them**, it might be sensible to remind the students about the multimodal resources you just covered (specific examples about how visual cues and sounds can create an impression might be especially helpful - social arrangements are not as relevant here, perhaps, although gender may be). You could even ask the students to consider whether they saw any women in these trailers. *Ask the students to pay attention to how these trailers use multimodal resources to create a certain kind of experience*. You can present these questions to the students before watching the trailers so that they can pay attention to relevant details: 1) How did you experience the trailers? What was the mood like? 2) What kind of resources did the trailers use to create the experience? 3) Did the trailers work? Would you change any details to make the experience better?

Handout 8: games and multimodality

Think about the game you played. In addition to the instructions you received earlier, **here are some things you could draw attention on**:

- Who are the characters in the game's narrative? How do they fit into the game world?
- What is their position in relation to other characters? How is their position reflected in the way they behave and are treated? Does their appearance match their position?
- How do they speak? What kind of dialogue are they given? Do they speak at all? If not, how do they communicate?
- How do the characters sound in the game? If you listen to games with combat, women sometimes sound almost happy when they are hit.
- Do the characters have a theme (appearance and/or music - both work)?
- Is gender relevant with any of the above notions? If so, how?
- How are the characters dressed? Does their choice of clothing make sense in the context? How do clothes affect the impression you get from the characters?

Lesson twelve: Textual intervention - part 2

Lesson objectives: Introducing textual intervention, working with textual intervention.

Students will be able to: Make their own textual interventions.

Instructions for students	*Instructions for teachers*
Get Lucky, warm up, 10 min.	

• Listen to this song by Daft Punk:
 ➢ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5N V6Rdv1a3I
  ▪ What is the song about?
 • Listen to a cover of the same song by Halestorm:
 ➢ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kn ZdklFoQkY
  ▪ The gender of the singer changes (compared to the original). Does this change the meaning of the song? If so, how?
	• **Copyright:** you can actually play these songs to the students. As long as you don't show them any moving pictures.
	 • This will hopefully remind the students of how changing parts of a text can affect the whole. The voice of a narrator (or singer) could be one such factor.
	 • You should give some thought to the songs as well.
	 • If the students insist it is the same song (the protagonist in the song is still a man because of the original song, for instance), you could ask what gave them the idea. This might be a good place to return to **discourse** and how the historical context of many discourses indeed shapes how they are interpreted. How would you interpret the cover by Halestorm without knowing that it is a cover?

Textual intervention, mini lesson, 10 min.	
• In groups of 4, in pairs or individually. • Access the following blog called *the Hawkeye Initiative*: ➢ http://thehawkeyeinitiative.com/ • Take a moment to browse the blog. You can talk with each other about what the blog has done and (more importantly) why. What is the purpose of this blog?	• Refer to **Central terms for teachers**. • You could also use other sources to illustrate the effects of textual intervention. They do not need to be gaming sources, considering that the technique should work with almost any kind of text. ➢ http://bikiniarmorbattledamage.tumblr. com/post/118425826859/eschergirls-internalsanctum-submitted ➢ http://bikiniarmorbattledamage.tumblr. com/post/116623991344/rightfully-so-happy-friday-everyone-ozzie ➢ http://sassy-gay-justice.tumblr.com/post/118032910795 /gay-but-not-for-pay-so-i-really-want-a-buddy ▪ I would watch this movie. • Basically, the students should come to a

Instructions for students	Instructions for teachers
	conclusion that textual intervention can be used to highlight selected areas in a text by altering that part of the text. In these images, attention is being drawn to gender. • Similarly, you could introduce a simple phrase like *"It would be hard for a single mother to represent the entire nation as its president."* What would the students change? If they are unsure, you could demonstrate by changing *a single mother* to *a single father*, for instance. Or *one person*.
Attempting textual intervention, 25 min.	
• In groups of 4. • Take a look at **Handout 9**.	• The students can find an image on their own, if they want to and if we have resources (tablets? phones? computers?). • In order to save time, basic examples can be provided (see: **Handout 9**). It is entirely possible that the students do not know where to start with their search. You could let the students to work on their own textual intervention based on images on the Hawkeye Initiative. • Discuss potential ways of doing a textual intervention with students (based on the handout, the mini lesson and your observations). See **textual intervention** in **central terms for teachers** for additional ideas. • This is also an exercise where the students get to practice group work. They have to discuss textual interventions and negotiate the kind of intervention they are going to do.
Analyzing textual interventions, 15 min.	

• Look at your textual intervention(s) and talk about the following questions:
  1. How did you interpret the original text?
  2. On which features of the original text your interpretation was based on, specifically?
  3. What was your intervention focused on?
	• In the same groups.
	• You can let fast groups take this step as soon as their first intervention is ready. Alternatively, you can let them two interventions first and then analyze both here.

Instructions for students	Instructions for teachers

4. What kind of impression you wanted to create?
    5. How well did you succeed in creating that impression?
    6. How is your intervention different from the original text?
 	
• Make notes of your discussion and be prepared to present them to the rest of the class.	

Textual interventions, class discussion, 25 min.	
• Show your textual intervention(s) to the class. • It might be necessary to explain where the original concept comes from (context). • Explain what you did to change the text in addition to showing your textual intervention. • Discuss your thoughts about how well your textual intervention worked together with the class.	• Potential technical difficulties depending on how the students perform their interventions. Requires situational solutions. • 5 minutes per a group, approximately. • If previous exercises take less time than anticipated, it is possible to devote more time to the students' presentations. • The students have had a lot of time to work with textual interventions and their own ideas, which should make describing them to the class relatively easy. Here, it is possible to see what the other groups have done similarly or differently.

Handout 9: attempting textual intervention

- Search for an image of a video game character (or a comic/movie/television character, if you have a good idea).
- You can use http://thehawkeyeinitiative.com for examples/ideas.
- Furthermore, http://bikiniarmorbattledamage.tumblr.com/ is also a good resource for finding images (or you could browse on your own). The Hawkeye Initiative might be the easier alternative given how they already have available interventions, whereas starting from a clean slate might give you more room to work with your own ideas.
    - http://bikiniarmorbattledamage.tumblr.com/post/118016762594/sparklewoods-bikiniarmorbattledamage-saw-age
    - (the writers of the blog point out that while these characters are exposed to a nearly equal degree, there is still a difference in the level of objectification - do you agree or not? What could be done to change the levels of objectification here? What is objectification made of?)
        - http://bikiniarmorbattledamage.tumblr.com/post/117855232598/semi-automatic-colonies-practical-male   (a potential answer to the above question)
        - http://bikiniarmorbattledamage.tumblr.com/post/114133359167/pixelboys-hot-throbbing-cross-male-paladins (Why, yes. I imagine an objectified man could look like this.)
    - http://adsoftheworld.com/ (A source on advertisements, something to browse?)
    - You could also search images by using specific game examples (What do you get by performing a Google image search on *Legend of Zelda* or *Grand Theft Auto*?)
- Fast groups can do two versions. The first version can respect the original text, whereas the second version can be a more radical interpretation (in other words: make fun of the text).
- Textual intervention can be almost anything - the same can go for the source text (please refer to **Handout 1: Central terms for students** for more information on textual intervention). You can redraw an image (see the Hawkeye Initiative above), act a scene from a trailer (which is great if the performance can be recorded for further inspection), write a piece of fiction or anything else you can think of.
- Discuss how your group wants to do a textual intervention. There might be time for more than just one, but it's quite alright to have one detailed example.

Lesson thirteen: Textual intervention - part 3, Ms. Male Character

Lesson objectives: Final notes on textual intervention, introducing Ms. Male Character.

Students will be able to: Discuss Ms. Male Characters and understand character design (multimodality, gender signifiers) in a larger context.

Instructions for students	*Instructions for teachers*
Ms. Male Character, a video, 30 min.	
• In groups of 4. • Take a look at **Handout 10**. • Access the following YouTube video by *Feminist Frequency*, which explains the concept of Ms. Male Character: ➢ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eYqYLfm1rWA • The video is fairly long. Taking notes is encouraged.	• A thought: it is okay to have signifiers of gender (any gender), but they can become (in the case of women in video games) all that there is to a character. Similar thoughts can be found in the central concepts section of the course material package (where you can also find details on Ms. Male Characters and the Smurfette principle). • Options: ▪ Watch *with subtitles* to make the video easier to comprehend. ▪ Stop around the 10 minute mark to discuss what "Ms. Male Character" seems to mean by this point. What are gender signifiers -which examples were mentioned? Can you add others? ▪ With discussion between the pauses, this exercise should take about 30 minutes.
Ms. Male Character, discussion, 30 min.	
• Having watched the video, discuss the questions presented in **Handout 10**. • In addition, you may want to talk about role-specific notions that were not covered in the questions. • Be prepared to summarize your findings to the other groups.	• You'll want to use the same groups throughout the lesson, most likely.
Ms. Male Character, class discussion, 25 min.	
• Present a summary of your findings to the others.	• Approximately 5 minutes/group.

Handout 10: Ms. Male Character

This handout should help you to focus on certain aspects of the video. Furthermore, it will be useful in the next exercise, where you discuss your observations.
- Use the following roles:
    1) Observe Ms. Male Character as a concept.
    2) Pay attention to gender signifiers.
    3) Specialize in the Smurfette principle.
    4) Manage time and present the group's findings.

- Be prepared to discuss these questions:
    1) What is a Ms. Male Character? What qualifies, what does not? What seems to be the problem with Ms. male characters based on the video? Do you agree with the video?
    2) What seems to be the problem with gender signifiers, as discussed by Sarkeesian?
    3) What is the Smurfette principle? Do you agree with the implication that men seem like the norm? What problems does the assumption cause?
    4) Can you think of any solutions to these problems? Can textual intervention help you there? Is there, in fact, a danger of using textual intervention to accidentally create a Ms. Male Character?
- If your discussion goes smoothly (after watching the video), you may already want to start discussing what you are going to say when presenting your observations to the other groups. It is also alright to explore alternative viewpoints and other ideas you might have at this point.

Lessons fourteen and fifteen: working on presentations in class

Lesson objectives: Giving the students uninterrupted time to work on their presentations in class. Providing scaffolding or school resources (computer access, for instance) as possible.

Students will be able to: Devote some time to their presentations without having to make an undue amount of extracurricular arrangements.

Before the lesson: Establish a schedule detailing when each group should make their presentation. Negotiating the schedule with the students is necessary and it should be done at least a few weeks before the first presentation.

The entire lesson
- The students work in their groups
- It is possible to have the students work in a computer class for the entire lesson, if that is possible. That way, the students have access to your advice and the Internet. Similarly, the students can work elsewhere if they want a quiet environment for group work.
- Ideally, you would be accessible during these two lessons so that the students can approach you with questions (whether they have to do with the content or the form of the presentation). Indeed, you should observe the students' work actively to spot situations where you can help and to conduct ongoing assessment.

Lessons sixteen to nineteen: Presentations (lesson structure)

Structure (of the presentations)

25 minutes, setup + presentation
- The group should spend some time introducing the context before moving on to their observations. It would be good if every group activated the audience by asking for their observations regarding the phenomenon the group is discussing.
- Alternatively, a presentation can have a practical portion that takes about 10 minutes.

20 minutes, feedback and discussion
- The students observing the presentations should be given around five minutes to collect their notes and to discuss their opinions with a peer (in pairs, preferably, but other seating/grouping arrangements are possible depending on the group and how you want to approach feedback). During this time, the presenting group will converge to discuss how the presentation went, offering each other insight on what worked and what did not work.
- After 5 minutes have passed, you should take about 5 minutes discussing positive things about the representation by allocating turns to the students who observed the presentation, asking them to give positive feedback (what worked etc.). Having done that, you should spend 5 minutes giving the students turns to comment on aspects of the presentation that still need to be worked on. Finally, use the last five minutes (or less) on rounding up some positive final remarks.
- Once a group has delivered their presentation and it has been discussed, they collect rubrics from the other students (which they can discuss and look at after the lesson). It is time for the next group to begin their presentation/to end the lesson (each lesson should cover two groups).
- You will also make your own notes about the presentation, which you can give to the group after the presentation. Here, personalized comments and qualitative feedback are likely more important than what you have put on the rubric. After all, you are likely reasonably familiar with this style of presentation and any insight you can give from this perspective should help the students to develop their presentation skills.

Goals of assessment

Presentations will act as the final challenge the students face during the course. As a larger project conducted by a team of four students, presentations should offer an excellent base for discussing teamwork and how well the group operated while planning and conducting their presentation (peer assessment and self-assessment). Furthermore the students observing the presentations can give more detailed feedback about how the presentations were put together (assessing both quality of presentation and quality of content). Indeed, the content of the presentations should also give you some information

about how well the students have understood the contents of the course (mostly the representation of women in video games). The students will receive a rubric they can use (an example is provided here, though you can alter it as you desire) as a tool for their analysis, but ideally every presentation will also be discussed in class.

- The rubric below (**Handout 11**) is a sample adapted from Gillies (2007: 186-187). You may **edit** it as you please.
- Alternatively, you can use a rubric based on earlier student discussion. What is a good presentation like? Ultimately, you and the students are the ones who decide what you are looking for in presentations.

Handout 11: a rubric for assessing presentations

Topic/Theme
- ❖ The group introduced their topic clearly and promoted good discussion/observations.
- ❖ The topic was clear, but perhaps it could have been utilized in more detail.
- ❖ The topic was unclear or discussion felt superficial/uninspired.

Activation and contact with the audience
- ❖ The group considered their audience well, the presentation was interesting and easy to follow.
- ❖ There were some unclear/passive parts, but generally the presentation was enjoyable to follow.
- ❖ The group needs to work on making sure the audience keeps up with the presentation.

Content
- ❖ There was a good variety of relevant examples. The examples supported the group's message well.
- ❖ The examples were relevant and reliable. There was a variety of examples.
- ❖ The group used a limited amount of examples. Some examples may not have fit the group's message (or may not have been illustrated clearly).

Aspects that worked well:

Potential areas of development:

Extra perspective - additional tasks:

The tasks included here are intended to be used if you want more options with the themes that are discussed during the course. Similarly, you might find that you need an additional task for time management reasons or an interesting/related point might be brought up during a lesson. Some of these exercises should work even when they are not used in the context of this course, although every exercise has been designed with the course in mind.

Instructions for students	*Instructions for teachers*
Character design, Batgirl, 10 min.	
- In groups of 4. - Access the following article by *the Outhouse*: - http://www.theouthousers.com/index.php/news/128185-new-batgirl-creative-team-debuts-first-practical-superheroine-outfit-ever.html - Consider the following questions: - Do you know Batgirl? What is her story? - What do you think about her character design (as illustrated in this article)? - Would you change anything? - How does the design compare to some other designs you have seen during this course?	- An additional resource on character design (focusing on pose), critiquing how the protagonist of *Metroid* (Samus Aran) is depicted in the latest games: - http://shattered-earth.tumblr.com/post/83751459225/smh-fuck-dat-teacup-pistol-style-too-samus
Empowered or objectified, 20 min.	
- In groups of 4. - Access the following article by *Everyday Feminism*: - http://everydayfeminism.com/2015/04/empowered-vs-objectified/ - Discuss the following questions: - What do you think about the article? What was the message? - What is empowerment? - How about objectification? - Do you agree with the point of view this article presents?	- Reading the article will probably take a few minutes. - If there is time and the conversation has been productive and varied, you could ask the groups to summarize their notions to the other groups. It is also possible to have some discussion among the whole class once the students are reasonably familiar with the concepts of empowerment and objectification.
Textual intervention, a video example, 10 min.	
- In pairs or groups of 4. - Access the following YouTube video: - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SCAQP7OJ9ls	My interpretation is that this video criticizes how women of color are treated as exotic objects by straight white men. Basically, the text inverts the roles by making a woman of

Instructions for students	Instructions for teachers

• Consider these questions:
  1) Could you imagine seeing something like this in a bar?
  2) Who would the most likely participants be in an exchange like this?
  3) What seems to be the message of this clip?
	color the person to approach a straight white man with the kind of discourse a straight white man might use when approaching a woman of color.

The role of women in male-centered stories.	

• Take a look at this blog post. What does it imply about the role of women in male-centered stories?
  ➤ http://sassy-gay-justice.tumblr.com/post/118162090515/fuzzykitty01-loki-of-sassgaard-thalieth
	• 5 minutes, approximately. The amount of time required depends on the depth of your discussion and the amount of sources used.
	• Could work as warm up.
	• Additional resources:
	  ➤ http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/StuffedIntoTheFridge
	  ➤ If you want more resources, you could also take a look at videos by Feminist Frequency, which explore topics such as damsels in distress and women as background decoration.
	  ➤ https://www.youtube.com/user/feministfrequency

Video game marketing and gender: Mass Effect 3	

• In pairs or groups of 4
• Take a look at the following sources
• A forum post regarding female Shepard in Mass Effect advertising:
  ➤ http://www.escapistmagazine.com/forums/read/7.292151-BioWare-Adding-Female-Shepard-to-Mass-Effect-3-Marketing
• An article and trailer by the Mary Sue regarding the above:
  ➤ http://www.themarysue.com/femshep-trailer/
• Another article by the Mary Sue, with a cinematic trailer:
  ➤ http://www.themarysue.com/femshep-cinematic-trailer/
• Discuss:
  1) What made these articles newsworthy?
  2) In your opinion, how should publishers market games with protagonists whose gender players can choose?
	• At least 15 minutes, although you can use more or a little less depending on how you arrange the task.
	• It is perfectly fine to ask groups/pairs to summarize their opinions to the class as well.
	• If there are multiple devices, you could save some time by having students work in groups of three, each student specializing in one link.
	• If you want/need to use groups of four and want to use roles, the fourth student could look at a Mass Effect 3 trailer that features the male Shepard. YouTube should be a reliable source.

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