THE ENGLISH ORAL LANGUAGE FUNCTIONS USED BY FINNISH PLAYERS IN COUNTER-STRIKE: GLOBAL OFFENSIVE

Bachelor's thesis

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract

Videopelit ovat ilmiönä alati kasvava ja ne vetävät puoleensa yhä laajempaa ja monimuotoisempaa yleisöä. Tarjolla on laaja valikoima erityyppisiä pelejä, jotka vaativat jokainen omanlaistaan kommunikaatio-osaamista. Erityisesti kilpailulliset pelit, joissa pelataan yhdessä joukkueen kanssa muita pelaajia vastaan, vaativat usein tietynlaisen kommunikaatiotyylin käyttöä. Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on selvittää, minkälaisia englannin kielen kommunikaatiofunktioita suomalaiset pelaajat käyttävät pelatessaan Counter-Strike: Global Offensive -videopeliä. Tutkimus keskittyy näiden kommunikaatiofunktioiden käyttöön ja siihen, miten muut pelaajat niihin reagoivat ja kuinka ne vaikuttavat pelin voittamiseen ja tästä saatuun nautintoon.

Tutkimusaineisto kerättiin 11-osaisella kyselyllä, johon vastasi sata suomalaista CS:GO-pelaajaa. Kysely sisälsi pääosin avokysymyksiä, joiden avulla vastaajien henkilökohtaisia mielipiteitä ja kokemuksia pystyttiin analysoimaan.

Tutkimusaineiston perusteella tärkein osa kommunikaatiota CS:GO:ta pelatessa on strategiapuheen käyttäminen, minkä avulla pelaajat voivat kommunikoida toisilleen reaaliajassa tärkeää informaatiota, joka auttaa heitä ottelun voittamisessa. Myös kanssapelaajien tervehtiminen nousi kyselytuloksissa esille, mutta sitä ei pidetty tärkeänä osana kommunikaatiota.

Strategiapuheen ja tervehtimisen lisäksi muita kommunikaatiofunktioita ei tutkimustulosten perusteella toivota käytettävän. Esimerkiksi vitsailu ja itselleen puhuminen häiritsi muiden pelaajien keskittymistä ja vei tilaa strategiapuheelta, mikä puolestaan heikensin joukkueen mahdollisuuksia voittaa ottelu.

Suurin osa vastaajista piti äänipohjaista kommunikaatiomenetelmää positiivisena toimintona ja toivoivat, että heidän kanssapelaajansa käyttäisivät kyseistä toimintoa strategiapuheen välittämiseksi. Kommunikaatiota arvostettiin myös sellaisissa tilanteissa, joissa kanssapelaajien englannin kieli ei ollut täydellistä tai siihen liittyi erikoinen aksentti. Ärtymystä esiintyi silloin, kun informaation kulku estyi kokonaan esimerkiksi viallisten kommunikaatiolaitteiden vuoksi tai sellaisissa tilanteissa, joissa toisen henkilön englannin kielen taito oli niin heikkoa, että puheen ymmärtäminen oli mahdotonta.

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Muita tietoja – Additional information

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1 INTRODUCTION

Video gaming is an industry that is ever-growing and captivates a massive audience. Video games are played all over the world, by players of all ages. In their 2018 Global Games Market Report, Newzoo (2018) estimates that the global games market will generate $152.1 billion in revenue in 2019. In addition, Limelight Networks (2019) state in their State of Online Gaming 2019 report that on average, video gamers spend over seven hours a week playing games. Thus, the study of video games and the act of playing video games may yield many positive findings that can be utilized in various fields, such as education. Even though the present study is not interested in the correlation between video games and academic success, highlighting the educational benefits of playing video games paves the ground for similar research. Moreover, a player may play video games to learn but also try to learn to become a better player.

The present study examines whether communicating with other people in English inside video games is perceived as beneficial in terms of winning. This was accomplished by posting questionnaires to Finnish players of Counter-Strike: Global Offensive (CS:GO), whose mother tongue is thus Finnish. This way, I was able to analyze the experiences and opinions of those who engage in communication with other players using the English language and see if they consider this type of English usage to be a positive practice. The initial hypothesis was that those who willingly use English while playing video games find it to be useful and increases their eagerness to participate in other conventions related to their personal interests utilizing the English language. However, some players might feel that they do not want to venture further than game world with their English proficiency. I believe that few players might even experience discomfort when being forced to interact with other players, whether it is via written text or orally.

Some research has been conducted on the enjoyment of video games by Vorderer, Hartmann and Klimmt (2003), who state that competitive elements in video games engage and involve the player and allow for instant feedback on the player's performance. The connection between communication and entertainment in multiplayer video games has been studied by Klimmt and Hartmann (2008), who list the increase of one's self-esteem and positive excitation transfer as some of the enjoyment values players may gain by communicatin with other players. However, little to no research has been conducted on the benefits of communicating with co-players in terms of triumphing victorious over the enemy players. Apart from Halloran, Rogers and

Fitzpatrick (2003), the language functions used in video games have received little attention. It is thus necessary to investigate what, why and how players talk to each other while playing video games. This knowledge can be utilized in language teaching, for instance, by recognizing the types of language functions students are most likely to use in their free time. Moreover, video games can increase the players' engagement and enhance their involvement in communication. Furthermore, the style of discussion used in video games can carry over to other digital platforms, especially if the topics are similar in nature.

After the introduction, I will present relevant existing research and theoretical background. First, it will demonstrate the reasons for why people enjoy video games and what benefits they may receive from playing them. Then, it showcases the interaction between players while they are playing video games. Afterwards, research questions, participants and the data collection method presented. Following that is the presentation of the findings. Finally, a conclusion of the study is given and proposals for future research are suggested.

2 LANGUAGE SKILLS IN VIDEO GAMES

In this chapter, previous research and relevant definitions will be introduced. Much of the discussion will be dedicated to communication abilities of people who play video games and the benefits video games have in terms of player interaction. Since the present study is interested in the usage and reception of various language functions found in people who play CS:GO, it is important to explore what is already known about online communication and the ways it is used.

The first part discusses the benefits of playing video games and how playing video games can increase one's communication abilities. The second part presents the different factors that can change the way players communicate with each other while playing video games. The third and final part introduces the central concept used in the present study, the language functions showcased by Halloran et al. (2003). The present study utilizes these language functions as its baseline for analysis.

2.1 Benefits of playing video games

Various studies have shown the connection between second language acquisition and playing video games. In addition to second language acquisition, playing video games has been shown to improve the language skills in adult learners as well (Barr 2017). Furthermore, video games offer an entertaining language learning medium. Authors such as Gee have argued that video games are not only beneficial for language learning but also pleasantly frustrating, challenging, interactive and contextually situated (Gee 2013). It is thus in our best interest to research the language learning opportunities presented in video games to widen our perspectives related to these opportunities. Some researchers (see Dragojevic, Giles, Beck & Tatum 2017 and Wiklund 2005) have examined the usage of spoken language and its effects on players. Since English is not only a written language, it is important to focus on the oral aspect as well. Halloran, Rogers and Fitzpatrick (2003) have studied the language functions of oral language in a situation where the players know each other and are playing in the same room (Local Area Network, LAN). The authors also examined situations where a single player tried to initiate a conversation with fellow players of the game. These findings are presented later in the study. However, little research has been conducted on the oral language functions used while playing

co-operative video games online. Thus, the present study examines if the language functions of a LAN setting are the same as those online, or whether online players have completely different types of language functions they use.

Since the main purpose of video games is to provide amusement and pleasure, they can offer a meaningful way to learn a language. Language is not seen as a hurdle but more as a means to progress further. Murray, Gao & Lamb (2011) found that while learning a second language, engagement in valued enterprises can be associated with positive motivation. For most video gamers, engaging in the world of a video game is a positive experience. If video gamers place value in the conversations that are held either inside the game world or in relation to the game itself, they may feel more motivated to continue practicing their English language use. Furthermore, video gamers who perceive that the usage of English language somehow benefits their in-game ambitions, such as acquiring knowledge, helping other players or overcoming an obstacle may become more motivated to partake in deeper discourse.

Video games are not only beneficial to children or teenagers but players of all ages. Video games can teach and improve various skills in players, regardless of their experience of playing video games. In his study to measure the development of graduate attributes (the skills and competencies universities provide to the students) of the Arts and Humanities undergraduate students by playing commercial video games, Barr (2017) found out that adult learners' communication ability, adaptability and resourcefulness could be positively impacted by playing commercial video games. Even though the study in question only included university students, it is likely that the findings would apply to students in other institutions or not fulltime students, since learning is a life-long process. It can thus be argued that playing video games is not only useful to young language learners or students, but rather learners of all ages. In addition, Barr (2017) notes that even short play periods and play time can improve graduate attributes. In other words, even those who play video games more casually but still engage with other players can develop their communication abilities.

2.2 Factors that influence communication in video games

Many video games offer the player a multitude of different in-game events and situations that can change the interaction between players. It is thus important to realize that one video game

can contain various types of interaction situations, where players adopt a certain way of communicating. Jia, Shen, Van De Bovenkamp, Iosup, Kuipers and Epema (2015) suggest that interactions that happen between players in online multiplayer games vary depending on the in-game circumstances. They offer a non-exhaustive list of five different situations that affect player interaction:

(1) SM: two players present in the Same Match.
(2) SS: two players present on the Same Side of a match.
(3) OS: two players present on the Opposite Sides of a match.
(4) MW: two players who Won together in a match.
(5) ML: two players who Lost together in a match.

My hypothesis is that MW players produce positive and advantageous communication, whereas ML players engender negative or perhaps malevolent language. It is also likely that as the match progresses, players may display diverse emotions and language usage depending on their personal performance, the performance of other players (both on the same side and the opposite side), the overall score etc. Consequently, it is difficult to predict a specific pattern that the players may follow during a match of CS:GO, the game which the present study focuses on, since a single match may contain more than one situation.

Some speakers may be conscious of their English pronunciation and accent, and thus avoid spoken English. They may experience anxiety while having to speak in a foreign language in fear of being ridiculed because of their speech. Research has shown that peoples' attitudes towards different language varieties, such as accents, can be influenced by the way these speech varieties are processed by the listener (Dragojevic et al. 2017). Accents that are easier to understand are generally more accepted than accents that are harder to understand. Consequently, accents that disrupt the comprehension skills of the listener can negatively affect the listener's view of the speaker's status (Dragojevic et al. 2017). Thus, a video gamer whose information and communication skills would otherwise be on point, but who possesses a more complex accent, may be disregarded simply because of their way of speech. As a result, these individuals may cease from participating in in-game communication altogether.

Playing video games and communicating with other players often to go hand in hand. In multiplayer games, being able to interact with other players seems to be the norm and games that diverge from this practice are the outliers. While analyzing the experiences of online chatting habits of 131 fourth to ninth grade students, Wiklund (2005) found out that out of 101 students, who all were involved in communication through computers, 16% spontaneously associated computer-based chatting with playing multiplayer games. Wiklund (2005) points out that even though the number appears small, the figure is quite significant, considering that not all the interviewees even play video games at all. In this regard, playing multiplayer games and communicating with other players seem to go hand in hand. Furthermore, 76.47% of the interviewees had a positive association between playing and chatting, whereas 23.53% experienced negative context-associations. While discussing the positive effects of communication in video games, many of the students felt that using the chat enhanced the gaming experience and allowed them to provide necessary information in real-time, as the following citations present:

"That you can warn your friend in Counter Strike" (boy, grade 6).
"That you can help each other in Counter Strike" (boy, grade 4).

Some students also described sharing strong emotions or feelings:

"That you can scream when you get shot" (boy, grade 7)

However, a few participants had negative experiences with chatting while playing video games, most often related to chatting distracting from the game flow:

"It can stop the game" (boy, grade 4)

"When you miss something because you chatted. In games I mean" (boy, grade 7)

One student was also bothered by the potential language used:

"That they say swear words when they play" (girl, grade 9)

These findings showcase that even though most students found being able to chat while playing video games pleasant and convenient, some had negative feelings towards chatting in video games. It is important to realize that different people react differently to the language, vernacular and the way they are expressed while playing multiplayer games. More research must be carried out on different styles and types of language used in online gaming to see how people relate to these kinds of language modes, which is what the present study strives to answer.

2.3 Language functions in video games

Language functions refer to the purpose which said language is being used for. In other words, it explains the reasoning behind one's speech or writing. Different language functions are used to accomplish different purposes, for example, describing something or trying to persuade someone. Halloran, Rogers and Fitzpatrick (2003) examined the type of language used when people play online with people they have not previously met. They found that there were six different language functions that players primarily used: joshing, crowing, self-/sidetalk, scanning, greeting and scoping. Joshing categorizes all types of jokes and use of irony. Crowing is defined as "celebrating one's own achievements, those of another, or their misfortunes." Self-/side talk refers to utterances that serve no other purpose than to vent out frustration or express annoyance. Scanning was used to search for other players, with its purpose being three-fold; first, it was used to find out which players were online, second, to initiate a conversation with those that were online, and third, to see if talking to other players was possible in the first place. Greeting was used when players began their conversation for the first time. Finally, scoping was used to acquire more information about other players after they had begun their conversation by asking questions about their nationality and age, for example. Halloran, Rogers and Fitzpatrick (2003) presume that the use of these formulaic utterances has two functions; first, it allows the other player to respond in a formulaic manner as well, making the interaction socially easier, and second, protects the player's identity until players become more acquainted with each other. It is thus possible that engaging in a conversation with a new acquaintance in a video game follows a specific set of unspoken rules and regulations that ease the beginning of the interaction, giving the participants more time to evaluate the personalities of other players and the likelihood of the communication being successful.

Halloran, Rogers and Fitzpatrick (2003) also analyzed the language used in a situation where all the players knew each other and were physically present in the same room. The players played an FPS game called Halo, which belongs to the same genre as CS:GO. In this scenario, a new language function that was not found in the previous study emerged, called strategy talk. Strategy talk includes sharing information that is vital regarding the game itself, such as the position of allies and enemies, the type of weaponry they have and reporting the different actions players are planning on doing. However, Halloran, Rogers and Fitzpatrick (2003) note that players were often talking at the same time and shouting at each other, while using relatively little strategy talk. They justify this by pointing out that FPS games often follow a repeatable play pattern, that is well-known for experienced players, thus not requiring a great deal of strategy talk. Moreover, having fun and joking around were perceived to be more important than simply winning. Even though the present study is interested in a situation where players do not share a mutual, physical space, these findings demonstrate the purpose of different language functions. Since CS:GO is a competitive game, the utilization of strategy talk over other language functions may prove to be more common. Furthermore, players in CS:GO are often teamed up with players they have not previously played with. Thus, the act of winning may become more prevalent and provide more pleasure than simply joking around.

None of the above-mentioned studies have focused on the competitive aspect of video games or the type language and communication competitive video games require from the players. Furthermore, there have been no studies on the oral English language used by Finnish players in multiplayer video games. Studying the type of oral language Finnish players use in CS:GO can guide further research on the topic. Moreover, researching these oral language functions can showcase what kind of oral language skills players use and need. This information can be utilized in, for example, language teaching in schools by focusing on the aspects of language the students are likely to need. Also, the connection between oral communication and success in terms of winning in multiplayer games has not been researched enough. Investigating this connection can determine whether oral language proficiency is something players ought to pursue.

3 THE PRESENT STUDY

In this part, the research goals and questions are presented. Afterwards, the data collection method and participants of the present study are introduced. Finally, the data analysis methods are explained.

3.1 Research goals and questions

Many who enjoy video games prefer games which include interaction with other players, often in the form of collaboration and teamwork. The present study investigates the communicative methods used in online multiplayer video games to see if players have developed a specific way of communicating with each other. The focus is primarily on the different methods of oral communication used to share information with teammates and how players perceive the possible benefits or hindrances of using these methods. Since video games gather an audience from all over the world, players who do not share the same mother tongue often resort to using English as lingua franca. For this reason, the present study focuses on the English language and more specifically, on English as a second or foreign language. The aim of this study is to examine what kind of language skills players expect from other players while communicating in Counter-Strike: Global Offensive. The study will also go through the possible advantages and disadvantages players may experience while communicating with others. As such, the research questions are as follows:

1. What oral language functions (joshing, crowing, self-/side-talk, scanning, greeting, scoping and strategy talk) do players use while playing Counter-Strike: Global Offensive?
2. What language functions do players want other players to (not) use?
3. Do players feel that other players' English language proficiency (or the lack thereof) affects the enjoyability of the match or the outcome of the match (e.g. winning or losing)?

3.2 Data and participants

As mentioned, the present study examines the type of communication players use while playing a first-person shooter game called Counter-Strike: Global Offensive (abbreviated to CS:GO). The aim is to find out if there any language utterances that players either expected or did not desire from other players. This was accomplished by posting questionnaires to players of CS:GO. This way, I could analyze the experiences and opinions of those who engage in communication with other players using the English language and see if they consider this type of English usage to be a positive practice. The initial hypothesis is that those who willingly use English while playing video games find it to be useful and this, in turn, increases their eagerness to participate in other conventions related to their personal interests utilizing the English language. However, some players might feel that they do not want to venture further than game world with their English proficiency. I believe that few players might even experience discomfort when being forced to interact with other players, whether it is via written text or orally.

The questionnaire was distributed digitally to a Finnish-speaking CS:GO Facebook group that at the time the study was conducted had 3200 members. The questionnaire was limited to and answered by 100 participants. The only common factor between all the participants in the present study were their mother tongue (Finnish) and the fact that they play CS:GO. No other restrictions were introduced.

The questionnaire included 12 questions, 10 of which were open-ended questions leaving room for the participants to elaborate on their answers. While asking about the topics players dicussed with each other, examples of greeting, strategy talk and personal topics were given as a guideline. Technically, the questions could have been answered with a simple yes/no answer, however, I requested the participants to use complete sentences while answering. I chose openended questions for this exact reason, since I wanted to get a deeper understanding of how the participants felt and close-ended questions would not have made this possible. The goal was to get the participants to use their own words instead of providing predetermined answers.

Before answering the questionnaire, the participants were informed about the aims of the study.

It was also made clear that their answers would be used as a part of the present study but no other possible future study. Furthermore, no personal data was gathered and therefore identifying the participants based on their answers is not possible.

3.3 Method of analysis

After collecting the data, I combined the answers to each question to a single cluster (e.g. answers to question 1 as a single group, answers to question 2 as their own group, etc.), because my aim was to analyse each question as their own entity, instead of analysing each participants answers seperately. After I had sorted the answers by question, I checked for any major themes or reoccuring topics. In addition, I arranged answers to two main groups whenever possible, based on whether they were positive or negative (e.g. whether people felt that voice chat was a positive or negative feature).

Based on the above-mentioned distinction, I highlighted the most used reasonings in both groups and checked for any abnormal or otherwise distinguishable answers from the mass. Then, utilizing previous research, I speculated over the possible influencers for the findings. The aim was to find out about the used language functions and how spoken language is experienced among video game players. The analysis was separated into four categories, which were as follows: language functions used and their importance, views on the enjoyability and significance of voice chat system, reception of other players' spoken English and speaking English and its importance in terms of winning the game. Each of these categories were analyzed by focusing on the appropriate questions from the questionnaire.

4 ANALYSIS

In this chapter, the analysis of the questionnaire is presented. First, all the language functions used are portrayed and their importance in CS:GO are reflected on. Second, the role of the voice chat system is discussed to see how players perceive the significance of being able to speak to their teammates. Third, the way players react to the spoken English language they hear from other players is investigated. Finally, the importance of spoken English regards to the outcome of the game is established.

4.1 Language functions used and their importance

The most used language function turned out to be strategy talk; 82% of the participants stated that they use the voice chat system to discuss game-related tactics and strategies with their teammates, such as sharing information about the enemy position. This does not come as a surprise, since CS:GO is a competitive game and effective communication improves one's chances at winning the game. Few participants stated that "communication brings cohesion and teamwork to the game, and the game flows smoother when you know what your teammates are doing" and "[communicating with your teammates] gives hope of being able to discuss basic tactics, increases confidence and improves your chances of winning the game." Interestingly enough, this seems to contradict the study of Halloran, Rogers and Fitzpatrick (2003), who noted the complete lack of strategy talk during online gaming with previously unknown teammates. Even though Halo, the game in their study, is also an FPS game, it may be that players of that game are not as competitively driven as the players of CS:GO, thus CS:GO warranting more strategy talk than Halo.

While 37% stated that they greet their teammates, only 2% said that they either ask their teammates where they are from or inquire about their age. Thus scoping, which is the act of acquiring more information about one's teammates, appears to be redundant. As previously stated, CS:GO requires a constant back and forth communication between teammates about the current state of the game. It may be that there is not simply enough time for players to engage in a more of a leisure type conversation in which they could get acquainted with other players. Even if one player has no information to offer to their teammates, they must be ready to receive information from the other players of the team. In addition, they must react quickly after

spotting enemy players and scoping may reduce their reaction speed, consequently weakening their performance in game.

Even though 37% stated that they "talk about everything" and/or "greet their teammates," none answered that they want their teammates to greet them back. Reasons for this may be that it is a default value; it is simply good manners to greet your teammates at the beginning of the game and thus occus naturally. In addition, a game of CS:GO lasts roughly

45 minutes, so there is not much time to get acquainted with one's teammates and chit-chat may be seen as unnecessary.

Scanning, which is used to find other players, also appears to be unnecessary according to the participants, since CS:GO automatically matches the player with four teammates and places them in the same voice chat, which makes it obvious that talking to other players is possible. On the other hand, scanning is also used to initiate conversation with other players. It can be argued that every single conversation thus starts by scanning and greeting when players say something in the voice chat, indicating to other players that they are willing to communicate. However, scanning was regularly found to be used in the study of Halloran, Rogers and Fitzpatrick (2003). The games in their study differ from CS:GO based on their communication premises; in CS:GO, one is always able to talk to their four teammates no matter where their character is or if they have been killed during the round or not, but in their study, communication was limited to, for example, to the two nearest players. The people who the player can communicate with may thus often change, requiring the use of scanning multiple times. In CS:GO, one's teammates change only after a match is finished and a new one is started, thus requiring less scanning to be used.

Self-/sidetalk was expectedly unwanted; none of the participants wanted to hear self-/sidetalk during the game, since it disturbs the focus of one's teammates via noise pollution. Since players can pinpoint enemy position via footsteps or identify the type of weaponry the enemy is using by gunfire, it can be difficult to hear if someone engages in self-/sidetalk during an important situation. Again, due to the competitive nature of the game, these findings differ from the ones found by Halloran, Rogers and Fitzpatrick (2003), since the games in their study were more relaxed and casual.

In the same vein, joshing and crowing (joking, the use of irony, unnecessary celebrations or bemoanings) offer no advantage when it comes to winning the game and are perceived as more detrimental, since they shift the focus away from crucial aspects of the game, such as strategy

talk, and disturb other players. However, a few participants stated that if their teammates are on the same wavelength, they may engage in joshing. One participant also stated that they partake in "lifting [their team's] spirit when someone makes a good play by praising them" or react by "being surprised." Although joshing or crowing offer no distinct gameplay advantage like strategy talk does, they may increase the team's cohesion and improve the overall atmosphere. This is supported by one participant's opinion, in which they state that "copious discourse restrains negative comments from spreading --- especially if there is a lot of conversation before a bad play, people do not start nitpicking about them as easily as opposed to a situation where there had been no communication beforehand."

It appears that the categorization used by Halloran, Rogers and Fitzpatrick (2003) fits with specific types of games. Based on these findings, CS:GO is not the type of a game that requires the use of all the language functions presented in their study. Different video game genres may necessitate the use of some of these language functions, but not all. It is thus extremely important to acknowledge the fact that different types of video games encompass different language functions and the players of these games are the ones who dictate how the communication is to be used. As such, the categorization presented by Halloran, Rogers and Fitzpatrick (2003) cannot be blindly applied to every video game. Instead, researchers must accurately pick those language functions that apply to that specific video game. However, this categorization cannot be viewed as a holistic truth, since it is possible that none of these language functions are used but a completely different type of a language function is observed instead.

4.2 Views on the enjoyability and significance of voice chat system

The consensus appears to be that the voice chat system is a helpful and positive feature; 98% hoped that their teammates would use the voice chat system and 86% thought that it is a useful feature. Interestingly enough, only 1% explicitly stated that they wished people would use the voice chat for jesting, since they thought that it was interesting to hear. The rest did not either specify why they wanted their teammates to use it or stated that they want to receive critical information to help them win the game. Most players thus see the voice chat system as a positive feature when it is used to improve their chances of winning the game.

12% stated that the voice chat system has both positive and negative aspects to it. Positive aspects were being able to share information in real time, voice chat making the game more fun (via casual conversation and sharing memes and jokes), improving one's English skills and meeting new people. These findings align with those of Klimmt and Hartmann (2008), who pointed out the positive correlation between mediated interpersonal communication and video game enjoyment. Some of the negative aspects listed include people talking very loudly or in a foreign language, players being toxic, mean, or flaming (insulting other players, often using offensive language and profanities) and discussing about irrelevant topics while others are trying to focus.

Moreover, 83% stated that being able to talk to their teammates influences their enjoyment of the game. In general, having teammates who talked affected the enjoyment in a positive way when the focus was on sharing information and giving positive feedback. On the contrary, negative enjoyment was experienced when teammates were either not communicating at all or "negatively critiquing other people's gaming performance, having a bad mindset towards the game or destroying the team's mental ability [to perform]" Only 12% felt that being able to talk to their teammates has no effect on their enjoyment of the game.

4.3 Reception of other players' spoken English

Generally, participants had no issues in understanding their teammate's spoken English. Only 7% reported that they sometimes have trouble understanding what their teammates are saying and 1% stated that they do not understand what is being said over half of the time. 6% also remarked that sometimes the failure to understand what other people are saying stems from faulty equipment, in other words poor quality microphones that make speech incomprehensible. Rest of the participants stated that they understand everything either quite well, well, very well or that they understand everything that is being said. Listening comprehension seems to cause no major problems to most of the players. This is most likely the case because CS:GO is a fast-paced game and only requires very basic level of English from the players. Consequently, players seldom hear complex expressions or sentence constructions if they are focusing solely on discussing the game. It is also a possibility that players may decide to filter out discussion that has no importance related to the game itself, thus avoiding more difficult language.

While talking to their teammates, 36% admitted that unconventional English, such as a thick accent or wrong pronunciation bothers them. A few answers even proclaimed that particular accents downright "piss them off." These observations comply with the experiences of Dragojevic et al. (2017), who state that harder to understand accents negatively affect the status of the speaker. On the flipside, 63% did not feel irritated by the diverse English they heard. The most important thing seemed to be that the other person tries their best and is somewhat comprehensible. Some participants pointed out that their own pronunciation is also imperfect and they "admire the fact that [their teammates] have the courage to talk even if their English is not perfect." In conclusion, irritation towards obscure English seems to result from information gaps – situations in which different complexities, such as strange accents, make it difficult for players to share information to one another. The present study did not investigate whether a player's in-game performance influenced how their spoken English was perceived by other players. This could very well be the case, as illustrated by the following extract from one answer: "I feel like players who speak English badly are automatically viewed as worse players and might get bullied for it."

4.4 Speaking English and its importance in terms of winning the game

Considering that 98% of the answers wanted their teammates to use the voice chat, it is surprising that only 39% thought that being able to speak English is necessary to do well in the game. One participant elaborated on their opinion by stating that "at some point, effective communication becomes emphasized since the level of skill between players gets narrower, thus even more marginal factors have a bigger effect [on the outcome of the game]" However, 35% stated that one does need to speak English well to do well in the game, since, as expressed by one participant, "in CS:GO it is enough to hit them [the enemy] in the head" [hitting the enemy in the head deals more damage than hitting their torso, and, in some cases, kills the enemy in just one hit]. 24% thought that speaking English is not necessary but considered it beneficial. It appears that a player who is better than the players in the opposing team can perform well without having to speak English. As the skill level between players evens out, however, effective communication can be the difference maker between winning and losing.

Perhaps the most surprising finding was that when it comes to speaking English to one's teammates, 95% stated that they experience no anxiety whatsoever. 1% got anxious only if

their teammates were native English speakers. Some reasons that were provided for low levels of anxiety include the fact that the other players are complete strangers, the level of English required in CS:GO is very basic, other people are not perfect either, it is only a game and their English will not be evaluated, or that they were simply confident in their own ability to produce speech and felt like their English is very good.

5 CONCLUSION

The present study examined the language functions that were present while people play CS:GO. The main aims were to find out what type of language functions exist in the first place, how often are they used and for what purposes, how do other players react to the use of these functions and how does being able to speak English to one's teammates affect the player's enjoyment of the game. The data was collected through an online questionnaire using openended questions. Open-ended questions were used to acquire a deeper understanding of the participants' opinions.

The first and second research questions were about language functions used and the reception of their usage. In the end, it turned out to be very straightforward. In essence, strategy talk was used most often and that is what most players were hoping from other players as well. Some other language functions were noted as well, mainly greeting, but views towards it were quite indifferent; many people greeted their teammates at the start of the game but did not technically expect it in return. Neither the presence nor the lack of greetings affected their communication style later in the game. As expected, players are playing CS:GO to win and an ongoing strategy talk with one's teammates throughout the game improves their chances at doing so. Other language functions, such as self-/sidetalk, joshing or crowing were often seen as detrimental and are thus mostly undesirable.

The third research question was concerned about the spoken language and how it affects the enjoyability of the game. As previously shown by Dragojevic et al. (2017), English that was difficult to comprehend was received not as well as English that did not cause issues in understanding. It appears that an accent in itself does not cause negative experiences to the listener but rather the fact that, in some cases, the spoken English is so hard to comprehend that the flow of information stops moving, causing frustration. However, the findings emphasize that trying to communicate when one is not proficient in the English language is preferred over being just silent. A large majority of the participants were not worried about their own spoken English, which could indicate that the Finnish education system does a good job in making students able to produce comprehensible English.

Furthermore, being able to speak to one's teammates was almost unanimously perceived to be a positive feature. Still, over half of the participants felt that speaking to one's teammates, albeit beneficial, was not necessary in order to do well in the game. It seems that as long as a player

is better at the fundamentals of the game, apart from communication, than their opposition, that is often enough.

It must be noted, however, that the sample size for this study is rather small, so no conclusive deductions can be made. Moreover, no personal information about the participants in the study was gathered, so it is impossible to tell anything about the participants apart from their mother tongue and the fact that they play the game. Thus, there may be great variance in their experience of speaking English, their age, occupation et cetera. Since the data analyzed from the questionnaire appears to be rather unambiguous, however, it can be argued that even with a relatively small sample size, these findings can be applied to the target audience as a whole.

Moving forward, more research is needed in the field of communication within gaming communities. The present study examined just a single title during a time period where thousands of online games offer communication possibilities between players. Different games and game genres may require different language functions. Understanding the language functions players use in their everyday life can also help schools orientate their English classes to better suit the needs of the students.

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APPENDIX

The questionnaire

How many hours a week do you play CS:GO?

Kuinka monta tuntia viikossa pelaat CS:GO:ta?

How often do you talk with your teammates in English out of every 10 games?

Kuinka monta peliä kymmenestä keskustelet tiimikavereidesi kanssa englanniksi äänikeskustelun (voice chat) kautta?

Do you feel nervous while talking with your teammates? Why or why not?

Jännittääkö sinua puhua englantia tiimikavereillesi? Miksi tai miksi ei?

Does being able to talk to your teammates affect your enjoyment of the game? If so, in what ways?

Vaikuttaako se, että pystyt keskustelemaan tiimikavereidesi kanssa pelistä saamasi nautintoon? Jos vaikuttaa, niin millä tavoin?

Do you wish that your teammates would use the voice chat system? Why or why not?

Toivotko, että tiimikaverisi käyttäisivät äänikeskustelua? Miksi tai miksi ei?

Do you think that voice communication is a positive or a negative feature? Name a few reasons why you feel this way.

Onko äänikeskustelu mielestäsi hyödyllinen vai haitallinen ominaisuus? Nimeä muutama syy mielipiteellesi.

How well do you usually understand what your teammates are saying while they are talking in English?

Kuinka hyvin tavallisesti ymmärrät, mitä tiimikaverisi sanovat puhuessaan englantia?

What type of topics do you discuss with your teammates? (Greeting, strategy talk, personal matters etc.)

Minkä tyyppisistä asioista keskustelet tiimikavereidesi kanssa? (Esim. tervehtiminen, strategiapuhe, henkilökohtaiset asiat, jne.)

Do you think that talking to your teammates is benecifial regarding the outcome of the game, i.e. winning?

Uskotko, että tiimikavereiden kanssa keskustelu parantaa mahdollisuuksiasi voittaa peli?

Does incorrect or obscure English spoken by other players bother you? (E.g. bad pronunciation, weird accent, etc.)

Häiritseekö sinua virheellinen tai vaikeaselkoinen muiden pelaajien puhuttu englanti (esim. huono ääntäminen, erikoinen aksentti, jne.)

Do you think players have to be able to speak English to do well in the game?

Pitääkö pelaajien mielestäsi osata puhua englantia pärjätäkseen hyvin pelissä?