Language & Video Games: A Cross-Genre Approach

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Introduction

Online multiplayer games are often thought to promote “toxic” language due to their competitive structure and need for cooperation (Josup, Kuipers, Martens & Shen, 2015). This exploratory study investigated language patterns of players from different genres and aimed to provide insight on how game characteristics may influence general language use in online communities.

Research Questions

Comparison between genres for:
1) Analytic vs Emotional Tone
2) Ratio of “I” : “He/She”; “We” : “They”
3) Top frequency words & profanity used
4) Topics in content

Methods and Materials

• Dataset: Gaming Subreddits
• Analysis & linguistic software used:
  • SPSS, LIWC2015 & MEH
• Data fail normality tests, thus error bars from paired t-tests and Kruskal-Wallis test used instead of ANOVAs
• Principal component analysis used; varimax rotation used
• Future direction: effect size?

Takeaway Points

• Though there was sig. diff. between game titles = trends consistently found across genres & game titles:
  • More analytic than emotional words used across all genre-games
  • “I” pronouns most prominently used
• Implications about game characteristics transferring into out-of-game context:
  • “Achievement” as a motivation for play possibly influenced language use of players and/or topic content.
• Strategic planning found across all genres as common topic content— differed slightly:
  • Emphasis on role selection/player recruitment vs analysis to achieve win conditions/professional play
• Overall, surprising lack of toxic language in top frequency words:
  • Implied trigger event in-game may be necessary