AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

LINGUISTIC JARGON OF THE STUDENT GAMING COMMUNITY AT AUB AND ITS ROLE IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF GAMERS' IDENTITY, SOCIAL INTERACTION AND COMMUNITY MEMBERSHIP

by

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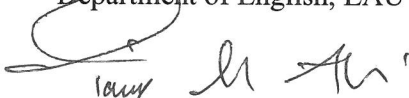
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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

<u>Brigitte Elie Ghorayeb</u>   for   <u>Master of Arts</u>
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The present study focuses on the linguistic jargon of the student gaming community and its role in the construction of gamers' identity, social interaction and community membership. According to Ensslin (2011), researching video games has been a hot topic over the past ten years because the gaming industry has turned into one of the most successful industries in the US, Europe and Japan. Gaming is now an activity that is not only enjoyed by isolated groups, but by thousands of social groups. Video games have had an immense and permanent effect on human culture, and their role in people's everyday life and society is increasing (Richards, 2010). For this reason, video games are extensively becoming a prominent cultural phenomenon. The popularity of internet games has led to the creation of a gaming jargon (such as 'noob' and 'RPG'), and as a result, the gaming community has built up a collection of specialized terms and expressions that are mostly incomprehensible to outsiders (Rhoads, 2007).

The purpose of the present study was to identify and categorize the gaming terms and expressions used by gamers of the student gaming community at the American University of Beirut (AUB), as well as determine the gaming language's effect on the gamers' identity, social interaction and community membership.This wascarried out by conducting an ethnographic study of a class called 'Fiction Writing' at AUB that involves the writing of narratives of video games and that has been taught during spring 2019 by Dr. Tariq Mehmood Ali. The class consists of 15 students that are gamers and that have learned how to create their own game and write its rules. Data for the study was collected through the following three methods: (1) participant observation in the weekly class for the whole semester; (2) corpus analysis of the papers that participants wrote for the class (data extracted from (1) and (2) allowed me toidentify thespecial gaming terms gamers use); and a survey that targetedthe same 15 students, as well as the 15 students who had taken the same class during last semester (Fall 2018). The purpose of the survey was to get their perceptions of the effect that the gaming language has on the gamersin relation to their identity, social interaction and community membership.

The findings of the study indicate that gamers do have their own linguistic jargon that can be categorized into the five sections that were listed by Wright et al. (2002): 1) creative game talk, 2) game conflict talk, 3) insult/distancing talk, 4), performance talk and 5) game technical/external talk. Their linguistic jargon mostly revolves around creative talk (such as joking and popular culture references), as well as technical talk (such as strategy talk and giving gaming tips). The findings of the survey show that the gaming language greatly affects the gamers in relation to:1) their identity because it allows them to create a gamer identity; 2) their social interaction because it helps them make friends and establish close bonds with them; and 3) their community membership because it makes them feel connected to the gaming community and gaming world.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Video games have emerged as a popular form of entertainment, especially among the youth, and producing games has become a profitable industry. According to Jones (2008), "video games are considered as one of 'the most influential form[s] of popular expression and entertainment in today's broader culture" (as quoted in Ensslin, 2011, p. 1). Crawford (2012) traces the origins of the gaming industry back to the 1950s, and its rising popularity dates to the 1970s and 1980s because of the development of arcade games such as *Space Invaders*. Video games used to be an under-researched area, but they have become a social phenomenon with their own digital space, their own communities and even their own jargon, and this is not always understood by others. Since the early to mid-2000s, its prominence has risen to the point that they now compete with other entertainment forms' such as the film and music industries. As a new social trend, the phenomenon has attracted the attention of many scholars in social sciences, especially anthropology, psychology, sociology and linguistics (Ensslin, 2011). Despite the popularity of the gaming industry, politicians, parents and educators have criticized video games as being deviant, morally questionable, and a distraction for young people. This opposition has in some instances led to several games being banned or censored. However, this hasn't stopped the growth of the gaming industry because it has become a cultural artefact.

According to Amine (2017), the gaming industry of the Middle East-Africa region is growing exponentially and is expected to continuously and rapidly grow in the next few years because this region has a huge population of online gamers. Hiawatha

(2003) believes that "like every other human endeavor, electronic gaming has evolved its own specialized lexicon, an ear-catching blend of computer geekspeak and schoolyard banter" (p. 2). Gamers have their own lexicon of computer gaming language, and any first timer would be clueless about what gamers are saying while playing because of the jargon of games such as 'Griefers', 'BFG', 'TKs', and 'Gib' (Hiawatha, 2003).

      The current study approaches video games from a linguistic analysis perspective. More specifically, it analyzes the linguistic jargon of the gaming community at AUB and its role in the construction of the gamer's identity, social interaction and community membership.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

A. Video Games Overview

In this study, the term 'games' refers to video games and includes any game that is played electronically. There has been a lot of controversy regarding how to define and classify video games (Crawford, 2012). Juul (2005) believes that any game is divided into six categories: (1) a game is a rule-based structure (2) that has a variable and quantifiable result, (3) in which the different results have different values, (4) the player exerts an effort in order to affect the result, (5) is emotionally attached to the result, (6) and the consequences of the game are negotiable (as cited in Crawford, 2012). According to Crawford (2012), video games are considered as a form of media by some scholars (because of the narrative scripts in games) and just games by others (because the media is a twentieth-century invention and games are much older). There are different terms to refer to 'video games' such as 'computer games', 'video games' and 'digital games' because of the variety of devices used to play video games (mobile phones, electronic game consoles, arcade machines, computers). However, the term 'video games' is the terminology that is mostly used and recognizable in academia. These games come in different forms; Web applications (like *Candy Crush*) or mobile applications (like *Clash of Clans*), or console, PC, or hand-held games (like *PlayStation Pocket*) (Crawford, 2012). Thus, video games can have different definitions and come in different forms.

The first online game was a teaching application created in the 1960's called PLATO (Programmed Logic for Automatic Teaching Operations). It was a computer

based educational program that was based at the University of Illinois. By 1972 it was supporting 1000+ users (Crawford, 2012). During the 70s, more games, multiplayer games started to appear on PLATO. In 1987, the first Massively Multiplayer game *Air Warrior* was created. Advances in video games have led to the development of Massively Multiplayer Online Games Role Playing Games (MMORPG) and have greatly improved the games' 3D graphical representations. The graphics of the online video games are regularly updated; so are the computer processing speed capabilities. One of the recent MMORPG game *Everquest* has even included voice recognition software compatibility so that people with disabilities can play it as well (Crawford, 2012). The online gaming market's worth has reached 6 billion dollars and is continuously increasing. The number of internet gamers is increasing exponentially on a daily basis and the demand for video games is increasing with it.

There are various types of games, and some can be considered to fit into more than one category (Hurst, 2015). For example, a soccer game is both a sports game and a simulation game. According to Hurst (2015), these are the different video game genres: (1) *Massively Multiplayer Online* (MMO), which are games that make the gamer use a network to interact with other gamers (even from around the world) in a virtual game room and provides them with an extraordinary experience; (2) *Simulations*, which are games that require gamers to drive vehicles such as tanks and ships, and in which the gamers learn how to control them. Even pilots use airplane simulators to train how to fly; (3) *Adventure*, which are normally single player games set in adventure or fantasy worlds, and the game starts with a background story of the character and information about what the mission is. The gamers have to finish puzzles to advance in the game and discover how to fulfill the mission; (4) *Real-Time Strategy*, which are

games set in real time, and in which the player has to build up an inventory of items such as armies; (5) *Puzzle*, which are brain games in which the player solves difficult puzzles, goes through different levels, colorful shapes and easy actions; (6) *Action*, which are fast-paced games that require fast reflexes. In these games, players choose their characters and fight with enemies; (7) *Stealth Shooter*, which are war or spy games in which one defeats his enemies; (8) *Combat*, in which the player fights with enemies in close encounters, and has to be good at using all fighting controls; (9) *First Person Shooters*, in which the player is the leading character and the game is viewed through his eyes; (10) *Sports*, which are real-world sports like soccer, and in which there are different skill levels and the player mimics real athletes; (11) *Role playinggames* (RPG), in which the player acts out the part of the principle character, and makes his own decisions;and (12) *Educational*, in which the player learns different subjects and is tested on achievement with multiple choice questions. Hence, there is a wide range of video game types that serve various purposes and each type affects people in different ways.

According to Richards (2010), the gaming industry has become popular because of its continuous technological advancements, as well as the affordability of gaming devices (such as gaming consoles, arcades, etc.). The gaming industry's success has been on the rise; big amount of sales, attracting marketing attention, and continuous technological improvements.According to Nielsen (2017), in 2019, there are 2.5 billion video gamers worldwide, the average male gamer is 33 years old, and the average female gamer is 37 years old (as cited in WePC, 2019). Moreover, the video games market is expected to be worth over 90 billion US dollars by 2020.Therefore, the gaming industry is continuously and gradually on the rise, and not only among the

youth. Some of the most successful games are in the category of Massively Multiplayer Online Games because they are full of interactive, innovative and immersive technology enhancements. Major video games such as the games *Call of Duty* and *Black Ops* have become globally successful and have sold millions of copies. Games have also proven to have a big effect on education and on identity, conversation and friendship construction (Crawford, 2012). According to Washburn (2009), the media's increasing popularity has led to the creation of different immediate and global technological forms, which have proved to have a huge appeal. Wood (2009) claims that the popularity of video games has increased to the extent that, according to an American 2008 study conducted by Pew Internet & American Life Project, "about 97 percent of American teens, 81 percent of adults between ages 18 and 29, and 53 percent of adults play video games of some kind" (p. 1). When playing video games, one can connect and interact with millions of other people who have subscribed to the same game, of course with people who speak the same language. People who are playing online games are socializing with other gamers and are establishing friendships, partnerships and even animosities with strangers. Video gaming has also become extremely popular in Lebanon. According to Osseiran (2017), the popular game 'Dota 2' is attracting a small but growing community in Lebanon and that this community brings people from different neighborhoods and sects together, as well as provides them with a chance to pursue a possible career as a professional gamer. Therefore, video games' popularity has risen to the point that they now affect the gaming community in major ways.

Video games are culturally and socially important and they are part of the everyday lives and social networks of video gamers (Crawford, 2012). According to Sørensen (2016), each country has a different cultural and social way of dealing with

video games. Gaming is a phenomenon that is present in different practices (Sørensen, 2016). In scientific practices, video games are considered to be an epistemological entity that provokes academic curiosity and experimentation. Video games are also provided as commercial goods, or as sporting leagues where people participate to compete in tournaments, some even playing professionally and earning money, and others simply using it for entertainment and leisure.

Elmezeny and Wimmer (2018) examined game cultures by taking into consideration the transcultural and transnational aspects of the gaming world in order to prove that games incorporate both local and international features. The authors claim that when someone wants to analyze video games' cultures, it is necessary to consider their transnational aspects. This is because of the increase of their popularity among the online community and so people are not only playing and interacting with people inside their social circles, but also with people around the world. They state that video games are a unique type of media that is a mixture of communication and leisure, and have a big role in building the gaming community, as well as in the gamer's identity and social life. There isn't one single game culture but several cultures that are embedded in the games, languages and practices of each gamer. Elmezeny and Wimmer (2018) categorized game cultures into three categories:

Table 1: Various Levels of Defining Game Cultures

Level of game culture definition	Description	Example cultures
Micro	Cultures of a specific game or community	World of Warcraft culture, EVE online culture. Or game cultures of a specific locale, e.g. California Smash Brothers culture, German FIFA culture.
Meso	Cultures of multiple games or communities with a common, unifying characteristic	PS4 gamers, Nintendo gamers, Retro gamers, Modders, Hackers, Speed Runners
Macro	The overall culture of games, gamers and gameplay	Game culture worldwide, or whole game culture of specific countries, e.g. South Korean, American or European Game Culture.

According to Elmezeny and Wimmer (2018), when looking at the gaming culture from a macro level, we can consider the entirety of gamers and the aspects of their culture as a whole, in order to analyze what defines them and their culture and how they interact linguistically. The cultural form of gaming opens the doors to understanding the gaming community, its unifying characteristics and the manner in which it shapes gamers' identity. Hand and Moore (2006) give an overview of the gaming world and its culture by suggesting that: "Digital gaming represents a distinct cultural form which at once problematizes current understandings of community and identity, and allows us to explore emerging patterns of community and identity formation"(as quoted in Elmezeny and Wimmer, 2018, p.180). Thus, seeing the gaming community as a whole uncovers the effect that video games have on the social and cultural levels. Richards (2010) claims that there are few studies that were done on how gamers interact outside of game play. Richards investigated the ways that gamers interact in relation to their gaming experiences by focusing on the *World of Warcraft* MMO game. He found that the gaming community is turning into a social arena that is increasingly beginning to recall a "convergence culture" (p 116). Gamers discuss similar topics, one of the most common ones being the 'worlds' of video games. Therefore, video games are greatly contributing to building a gaming culture and community.

B. Gaming Community

According to Richard and Gray (2018), a video game can be powerful enough to create a big community around it, even if it is one that relies on a virtual environment. Games' success depends on their ability to provide an area for gamers to

interact and play together, to make friends or enemies, to create memories and identities, and to gain reputationamong the players.Richard and Gray (2018) state that video games have their own community because they define a community of practice by the learning domain (gaming), the community (gaming community), the practice (building social and material resources useful for leaning), mutual engagement (decisions and actions taken together), joint enterprise (common purpose), and collective repertoire (common created discourses and meaning).

1. Building Groups

In the gaming community, there are substructures of gaming communities because the players establish groups based on the game genre such as 'clans', 'guilds', 'pledges' and other groups (Richard & Gray, 2018). They engage in useful practices and negotiate on their own terms, which as a result, strengthens their subgroups. These subgroups go under the name of affinity spaces, which are communities that are united by a common interest in games and popular culture and it gives gamers the opportunity to learn more about their interests.People in these communities have the chance to create their own content and blogs, as well as provide knowledge for audiences, which in turn helps them build an 'expert' identity in their areas. According toPerez (2015), a gaming community's success depends on maximizing the pleasure its players have within the worlds in which they play together. And this pleasure depends on what the community members believe is fun about the games they play (their gaming styles and personal preferences), and that is why there are different types of gaming communities. Even if gamers focus on having fun and building friendships, they tend to join the community that has the same understanding of enjoyment and share the same goals.

Affinity members need other people to join and indulge in dialogues so that affinity spaces can be created, and these spaces can be found in any kind of mass media (films, video games, etc.) (Vazquez-Calvo, 2018). Affinity spaces in the gaming world fall into different forms such as fanfiction, fanart, fandubbing, etc. Gamers account for these spaces to provide valuable content for the community. They are grouped in these spaces and act based on their established roles (Vazquez-Calvo (2018).Perez (2015) examined an online gaming community called *Gaiscioch* that exists in the simulated world of a MMORPG game. He discovered that this community is inclusive, friendly and casual and that the elements for having a sustainable online gaming community are: social interaction through teamwork, having the same code of values, fair leadership, clear and defined ranking system, regularly hosted events, building a sustainable sense of community, maintaining an appropriate population size, and choosing the appropriate gaming world. Moreover, all of these elements are successful because they function in a way that addresses all of the members' goals and desires. Hence, not only is there a community for gamers, but there are also sub communities that are strengthened by common interests.

2. Building Learning Experiences

Video games have proved to have several benefits because they provide learning experiences (Levine, 2009). They help on the level of collaboration, critical and systematic thinking, problem-solving and coping with negative emotions. Having a gaming program leads to entertainment and engagement within a community. Gaming gives gamers transformational experiences and it can be used as a low cost tool when there is a need for recreation and content (like book discussions), social communal

space (like rooms for knitters), literacy programs, or interactions between different demographics (like family events).Jang and Ryu (2009) examined South Korean online gamers' behavior and discovered that game community participation, team play, and the active attitude in accomplishing the mission of a game were positively related to game leadership. Video games provide gamers with the opportunity to build their participation and leadership skills because of their active attitude of completing missions in groups (Jang & Ryu, 2009). This is done by performing organizational tasks such as recruiting, assessing and rewarding team members. Engaging in MMORPGs games allows players to interact with other players, which in turn improves their social and communication skills.

Hoffman and Nadelson (2010) investigated the factors that are linked to motivational engagement in video gaming which are goal orientations, affect, need for cognition, and perceptions of engagement and flow. They discovered that gamers exhibit motivation towards games and their tasks because they perceive it as challenging but relaxing. This makes them feel intense and goal oriented because it affects them positively both emotionally and intellectually even when they would lose a game. Jones (1999) stated that "For better or worse, digitally rendered environments can be as, at times more, engaging than reality" (as quoted in Hoffman and Nadelson 2010, p. 327). Vazquez-Calvo (2018) examined the digital language learning practices induced by gaming as a fan practice by using the New Literacy Studies frame of analysis on an active gamer called *Selo*. The results showed that *Selo*'s fandom is a social arena that is filled with gamers exhibiting different degrees of involvement, roles and functions. Moreover, the results show that *Selo* has a variety of literacy skills on

both the linguistic and sociocultural levels. Finally, *Selo* and the fans acquire

meaningful linguistic items by referring to other fans' textual feedback.

Kelly (2012) investigated how second-generation gamers perceive dispositions,

identity performance, community membership and video game addiction. By doing an

ethnographic study, she found that these gamers are neither 'hardcore' nor 'casual'

players. They believe in being oriented, embodying diversity, thriving on consistency,

learning what is necessary and relying on confirmed solutions. They are also not the

typical gamer on the level of gender, age and ethnicity and respond to the gaming

culture in a way that affects their personal and social identities. When they enter the

gaming community, they decide how to present themselves and their role to the other

players, and some of them end up taking an extremely meaningful one in the

community. Finally, they develop play-limiting strategies to avoid video game

addiction. Therefore, video games can be considered as an enlightening and educational

platform for gamers.

3. Building Identities

According to DeVos(1992), it is not simple to define the term 'identity'

because it seen as a plurality, and not a unitary concept. He believes that "identity is the

individual's concept of the self, as well as the individual's interpretation of the social

definition of the self, within his/her inner group and the larger society" (as quoted in

Kim, 2003, p.2). Building an identity is an unconscious, difficult and enduring process.

A lot of research has been done on the concept of identity. West (1992) linked identity

to material relations of power (the desire of recognition, affiliation, security, safety and

material acquisition) (as cited in Kim, 2003). People who have access to material

resources in society will have power and privileges and this will affect how they perceive their world and future (Norton, 1997). Because today's society is a materialistic one, it is people's material resources that will define how they articulate their desires. Bourdieu linked identity to symbolic power because speech cannot be assessed without knowing who the speaker is and the speaker cannot be understood without his network of social relationships (as cited in Kim, 2003). The example he gives is that if a junior executive says something significant he might not be rewarded, but if the Chief Executive Officer says the same thing, he would be praised for it. According to Antaki and Widdicombe (1998), the identity of a person is not something that is fixed, it depends on the context in which the person is situated. The identity of a person can vary and a person can have more than one identity. Esseili (2011) claims that identity is not reduced to one component, even a Lebanese dialect can be an identity marker by manifesting regional linguistic and religious differences. According to Park (2011), the 'Social Identity Theory' determines that one's social identity is a person's self-perception in relation to others in the social group to which he belongs. Park states that how we perceive each other is crucial to any social interaction and the structure of our society and culture.

Kelly (2012) claims that gaming experiences help in identity building because gamers choose the person they want to be in the game. People on the Internet can interact with others and take over a personae of their own invention.As a result, games change the way people think about their identities. This shows how interacting, even if it is just virtually, has a big effect on one's self-perception of identity (Kelly, 2012). This can be found especially in MMOs like *World of Warcraft*. This game provides its gamers with a big space for indulging into identity performance because in it, the

communication is separated from the physical body, player identities are determined by the role played by the character in the game as well as their way of interacting with other gamers (Kelly, 2012). In this game, the first task is to create an avatar, and while creating it, gamers have to take decisions that determine their future interactive possibilities with the other gamers and in the gaming world. According to Gee (2011), video game players interact with each other not with their real identities, but through the identities of the game characters, unless when presenting oneself in his or her real identity benefits him or her. The author calls it 'cross-functional affiliation', which is when people use their cultural and social differences not as barriers, but as strategic resources. Thus, video games provide gamers with a way to manipulate their identity, as well as the way they perceive it.

4. Building Friendships

When the internet was created, people used it for entertainment and socializing, and with time, they combined the two when they created websites in which players can globally interact and create characters and adventures together (Cărătărescu-Petrică, 2015). Afterwards, these websites turned into complex 3D virtual worlds, such as MMORPGS, in which a huge quantity of people interact and immerse themselves in imaginary worlds. With time, people have become obsessed with these games because they provide entertainment and foster communities in a way that builds trust and camaraderie between them (Cărătărescu-Petrică, 2015).

Cărătărescu-Petrică(2015) investigated the characteristics of the community and practice built around the MMORPGs game *World of Warcraft*, as well as the effect of the game architecture on the game's community. She discovered that this video game

has fostered its own community because it is a source of entertainment that provides its players with a place to engage in entertaining and useful interactions with other gamers, while creating long-lasting identities and memories. They created a distinct culture that is full of values and accomplishments. Voulgari and Komis (2011) investigated the collaborative learning interactions that take place in Massively Multiplayer Online Games (MMOG) by focusing on the formation, structure and interactions of the groups and the processes they go through. They chose this type of game because it is an interactional and competitive game that requires an expertise of game mechanics, as well as managing interpersonal and social skills. They discovered that the players' practices and the design features are interconnected. This was clear by the fact that most of the participants felt that they are part of a group and what differed each group was their design and the social relations of the players. The game provides them the opportunity to establish interaction, communication, group management, knowledge sharing. These opportunities help build trust and bonding with other players, especially in the long-term groups, since the game requires the players to perform communicative and decision-making tasks. The results showed that trust, commitment, cohesion and helpful behavior among group members is more common in the long-term groups than in the random ones. Thus, a gamer can, from his own home, make a lot of friends because of internet connections (Wood, 2009).

5. *Building A Gaming Linguistic Repertoire*

According to Ryu (2013), when gamers engage in game play and with the gaming community, they enrich their language through gaming culture; they engage in collaborative interactions with other players in which they enrich their game play by

talking about gaming issues, debating about strategies, and creating fan-fictions. Ryu (2013) explored how non-native English speaking game players engage in language learning practices through game play and culture. He discovered that the players learn game play words and phrases while playing games and that they practice discourse when interacting with native gamers in the online community after playing games. Moreover, the results showed that their engagement in gaming culture was related to influencing their language learning through collaborative interactions. Gee (2011) claims that the language learning process not only happens while playing games, but also after the game play ends when gamers interact in the online gaming community. When gamers play, they can develop their language through gaming culture by learning words and expressions that refer to the game content.

There are several programming words that cannot be really understood if not experienced, like 'inventory screen', 'goals/notes screen' and 'hotkeys' that are found when playing video games (Gee, 2011). If you have an understanding of the game, these words will hold more meaning. You can open a booklet to check their meanings, but it is not until you play the game and get experienced with these programming features that you will fully grasp the meaning of these words and the game. When you become a game player, you learn how to see the world of each game you play and in different ways because each time you are faced with a new game, you see it in terms of how you can afford to play it in order to reach your goal.

Wright, Boria and Breidenbach (2002) believe that knowing the gaming terms is crucial in the gaming community. The conventional type of gaming language leads to an egalitarian friendship between the players, but using and mastering the 'insider' language is necessary if someone wants to be considered an experienced player and not

a 'n00b' (Wright et al.,2002). Wright et al. claim that playing multiplayer games can greatly affect the everyday rules of social interaction between gamers as well as produce creative changes in verbal expressions. Consequently, they analyzed the way internet players in Chicago talk when playing CounterStrike and discovered 39 coded talk categories that appeared the most among the gamers and that fit into 5 major ones: 1) creative game talk (such as naming, word play, joking, map judging, popular culture references), 2) game conflict talk (such as cheating accusation, police talk), 3) insult/distancing talk (such as taunting or annoyance talk, homophobic, racist or sexist talk, or angry talk), 4), performance talk (such as blaming someone, apologies for failure, confusion, game strategy talk, team talk, friendly fire talk, revenge talk) and 5) game technical/external talk (such as talk about technical game matters, talk about other gamers, map related talk, request for information). Therefore, the gaming world is a place that is full of rules and conventions that are reachable only for the experienced players, and one of the most important rules is to master the gaming terms (Wright et al., 2002).

C. Youth Language

1. Social Media And Language

According to Sauro (2015), the vigorous intrusion of digital communication technologies into people's daily lives has deeply mediated the language that they use. This is mainly due to the linguistic constraints that were set up in order to interact in the digitalized contexts of these devices. Research has shown that the availability of the dominant technologies is increasingly modifying languages. Seargeant and Tagg (2014) have discovered that the building of both an identity and a community is prevalent in

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several social media contexts such as Facebook and Twitter, whose sole purpose is to develop networks and friendships. This is found especially on Twitter, because it allows people to create hashtags that are based on unified concepts and YouTube, whose focus is to foster communities. These networks open the doors for its users to build social relationships based on similar interests and to represent themselves linguistically in these social media contexts. According to Chun (2018), it is critical to analyze the pervasive linguistic pedagogy that is present in social media contexts because they allow us to understand the formation of identity and social structures. Digital technologies have entered people into 'digital literacies' because of their frequent texting, especially among the youth. These online spaces have pedagogical implications to society because they have enabled extensive textual interactions across various online platforms and shape people's linguistic skills (Chun, 2018). Thus, social media and language are intertwined in people's everyday lives.

An example of how social media affects language is the Benjamin Bloom Taxonomy of educational objectives. It is a 1956 framework that is used in learning and assessing, and that had to be modified because of the technological progress into Bloom's Digital Taxonomy (Bertucio, 2017). This change was done by including digital concepts into the domains such as adding digital verbs ('googling' and 'twittering') that are common in people's daily lives as well as the use of educational online tools (Nikolić&Dabić, 2016). An important concept that explains how social interaction can have a big effect on language is Vygotsky's social learning theory. This theory illustrates how social interaction is crucial for cognitive development because community plays a crucial role in the process of 'making meaning' (Daniels, 2005). Vygotsky determined thatpeople learn through their interactions and communications

with others and that is how they construct active learning communities. (Newman &

Holzman, 2014). This is becauseit is through people's cultural lens that they interact

with others and follow the rules shaped by their culture.

2. *Arabizi*

One example of how social media mediates language is the 'Arabizi' language

that is very prevalent in Arabic social media (Darwish, 2014). According to Yaghan

(2008), 'Arabizi' is considered a slang term that refers to the Arabic language while

using English characters, and it is used for text messaging systems, whether on the

Internet or on cellular phones. The term comes from 'arabi' and 'englizi' but for easier

pronunciation it is pronounced as 'Arabizi' and not '3rabizi'. According to Darwish

(2014), it represents both Modern Standard Arabic and other Arabic dialects and it is

used in informal settings such as any internet site. Arabizi is also referred to as Arabish

and Franco-Arab. Arabizi's main purpose is to refer to the Arabic letters that do not

have a phonetic equivalent in English, and that is very common since Arabic has more

letters than English (Darwish, 2014). For example, replacing the Arabic letter "ا" with

the number "2", the letter ""ع" with the number "3", and the letter "ح" with the letter

"7". Arabizi is used extensively for communication on the web, and for sending

messages when the Arabic script is unavailable or harder to use (Bies et al., 2014). It is

used when there is a lack of good input method on a cellular phone or when the person

typing is unfamiliar with the Arabic keyboard. Some writers even write Arabizi so that

they can code switch to French or English (Bies et al., 2014).

3. Gaming Jargon

Another example of how social media mediates language is how playing video games leadsto the change of everyday rules of social interaction as well as the change of verbal expressions. These games bring the gamers together in a social world, and this is shown by the diversity and creativity of their talk (Cărătărescu-Petrică, 2015).According to Blommaert (2013), the video gaming world has gathered around millions of gamers who share the games' jargon, which shows how "globalization has caused the emergence of entirely new forms of communities and forced us to think about the connections between language, individuals and collectives" (p. 7). Speech communities emerge whenever people recognize each other's deployed communicative resources as meaningful (Blommaert, 2013). Shared indexical orders (registers, genres, styles) are the key to speech communities and they explain why people can understand each other in spite of huge differences in language, social background, etc. Everyone, at any time of their lives, is part of a broad range of speech communities, whether it is at home, between friends, in professional or administrative environments, as media audiences, etc. Moreover, people's lives constitute different forms of mobility, and that is why they are always entering or exiting old and new communities. From each of these communities, people acquire specific registers, genres and styles (Blommaert, 2013). \

Gamers play with real friends or people they have met in the game, and discuss the 'pros' and make fun of the 'noobs' (spelled 'n00bs' and refers to a first-time, inexperienced gamer.), while speaking game-related jargon. This unique and complex jargon is what makes the gaming community stand out because it belongs to their world and it would sound like gibberish for non-players. Their language consists of acronyms, abbreviations and jokes. Russell (2006) claims that the language used by gamers is

much more interesting than the games they play because he believes that using technical arcane vocabulary gives a feeling of control over the concerned subject and in turn a feeling of power. He describes the cryptic language used by gamers as 'tech talk' and 'nerdspeak'because this kind of vocabulary is exclusive, as in having access is limited to the insiders. Russell links it to the neo-Freudian theory of language which suggests that language is patriarchal, and naming something leads to controlling something.

According to Heinlein (2014) one of the strange jargon of trade lingo that comes from the world of game design is 'Grokking', which signifies a person that has become an expert at something). This term is commonplace for video gamers and is used to describe for example if a player has learned a mechanic in a game. So when a gamer has grokked something, he can do it effortlessly, the gamer then becomes connected to the game and the game character. The source of this word is from Robert Heinlein's 1960 sci-fi novel entitled "Stranger in a Strange Land," in which the word is a Martian word that means to understand something fully and become connected to it. According to Hiawatha (2003), there are several gaming terms that are commonly used such as: 'Gib' (it refers to the act of destroying an enemy into bloody pieces, which is most commonly used in shooting games), 'BFGs' (it is used to call weapons like a supergun that can beat the strongest opponent with just one shot), 'TK' (refers to 'team-killer' and it means when someone who is on your side messes up and ends up killing you accidentally, so it is a result of incompetence), 'Buffing' (when the player enhances a skill that the game character will need to complete a challenge), 'Skirmishes' (a little fight in which little is lost or gained), 'Griefer' (when someone purposefully wants to make the game more difficult for the other players), 'corpse run' (to have your character's ghost run to the location of your dead body to resurrect it), 'llama' (a variant

of lamer) These terms are not really obvious, but there are some that are, like 'Smacktard', which is a bad player and does not help the team with winning (Hiawatha, 2003).

According to Rhoads (2007), there is the term 'pwn', which is a result of the misspelling of 'own' by gamers who type really fast when playing a game, and that is used when someone defeats another. Another common change is the replacement of E by 3, which is called 'leetspeak' and it is a system of modified spellings that is used by gamers. These kinds of changes occur because there is no uniform code, for example, A can have several substitutions (like @, ^, 4, etc.). Some of the words that are used in text messages are also being used by gamers like 'lawl' for 'lol' and 'pwn' for 'pone'. 'Pone' has gained a lot of popularity as it has been used by game champions and even in television shows such as "South Park". However, there is disagreement about the pronunciation of this word, some people pronounce it as 'poon', 'puh-own', 'pwone'. Therefore, gaming and the digital devices that are used to play video games are significantly mediating language. The prominent increasing popularity of these gaming jargon are building a new language that belongs solely to the gaming community.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

A. Purpose of The Study

This paper seeks to gain an understanding of the gaming jargon that is used by the student gaming community and the effect it has on the gamers in relation to identity, social interaction and community membership.

B. Significance Of The Study

This study is a new piece of research in the Arab world context that contributes to different fields: language acquisition, sociolinguistics, computer science studies and media studies. This research is significant as it contributes to understanding how games play a significant linguistic, social and cultural role in gamers' lives. Moreover, it fills the gap in the literature on communication in the universities and on the media in the Middle East.

C. Participants

The participants that were part of the researches' observation activity were 15 undergraduate student gamers, 10 males and 5 females who belong to a similar age group (19-22)and who study at the American University of Beirut (AUB). Theytooka class in Spring 2019 called 'Fiction writing', which is taught by Dr. Tariq Mehmood Ali. It is a class that focuses on how to create and write video games. I had the permission of the professor of the class to attend the class, and got the consent of the students to have them as participants for the research study once the class started. As for

the third part of my study which is the survey, I distributed it to the students of the class and to the 15 other AUB studentswho took the same class last semester (Fall 2018),and also 10 males and 5 females who belong to a similar age group (19-22). This allowed me to get a representative sample, in order to properly examine the effect that the gaming language has on the gamers in relation to their identity, social interaction and community membership.

D. Context Of The Study

Video games have become a highly popular industry that has gained billions of fans. These fans have formed a community that participates in a shared culture as well as in using their own jargon. This has reached the extent that it has turned into a proper language that would sound like complete gibberish to outsiders. There is a big number of students at AUB that share a gaming passion, which has brought them closer together and as a result, they interact using gaming terms. According to Vazquez-Calvo (2018), it is necessary to investigate online environments to discover the changing nature of language and the dialogues between gamers. The online gaming worlds offer gamers a place of language and communication, more specifically vernacular language practices.

The following study aims to answer the following research questions:

- What are the specialized gaming vocabulary used by the gaming community at AUB?

- What effect does the gaming language have on AUB student gamers in relation to identity, social interaction and community membership?

E. Data Collection Procedures

Before starting the study, ethics approval for the participant observation, the corpus analysis and the survey were sought from the AUB IRB.This study is an ethnographic one in which the experiences of students were observed throughout the semester in the gaming class. It focuses on the gaming community and culture by looking at the cultural understanding and meaning-making of gamers. The data for the study was collected by means of: (1) participant observation of 15 gamers that interacted in a class that teaches learners how to write the narratives of their own video game; (2) corpus analysis of the papers that they wrote for their games; and (2) a survey that was distributed to the students of the class, as well as other AUB students who are gamers.

For part 1, I audited the class to observe how the students talk, while keeping notes of any game-related jargon (any word or expression that is related to gaming or that is only used in gaming contexts). This way I have written records of the gaming jargon that they use in the oral form that I could review and analyze. I chose participant observation because it provides the opportunity to observe and take notes of how participants communicate and interact with each other in a natural manner; what kind of common and uncommon game-related terms they use; and in what kind of context they use them. Observing the class allowed me to integrate into the community and to thoroughly understand the terms that belong to the community and what is truly meant by them. My role was that of an objective outside observer with no intervention in what was going on in class.

For part 2, I did a corpus analysis of the papers that were written by the students of the class. Students were asked for this course to describe and explain games

they find interesting as well as write the narrative of the game that they would like to create. These papers are full of game-related terms, and this way I have additional written records of the gaming jargon that gamers use in the written form.

For part 3, in order to explore the effect that the gaming language has on the gaming community, I developed a survey on the AUB LimeSurvey (a copy of the survey is found in the appendix) that asks multiple-choice questions about gamers' opinions about how the gaming language they use affects them in relation to:identity, social interaction and community membership. I distributed the survey to the students of the class that were observed, as well as the students who took the class in fall 2018 so that I have an adequate sample.

F. Data Analysis

I extracted any game-related jargon used by the students from both the participant observation (oral form) and the corpus analysis (written form) and put them into different specific categories. The terms that were extracted from part 1 and 2 were read and re-read and then coded, which in turn helped me identify the gaming terms that were used by the gamers and then categorize them. I adopted the categorization method of analysis that was used by Wright, Boria and Breidenbach (2002) that was mentioned in the literature review because it has been proven to be very useful when analyzing the gaming language and to see if I would get the same or differentcategories (creative game talk, game conflict talk, insult/distancing talk, performance talk, game technical/external talk).

As for the third part, the survey asked the participants about their choice of gaming jargon use, what kind of talk category they use, and how knowing the gaming

language affects them. This survey represents gamers' opinions regarding the gaming language's effect on their identity, social interaction and community membership.

E. Limitations

This study has some limitations: First of all, the participants of the study are all students from the same university, and so the results are not representative of all university student gamers in Lebanon. Second of all, the participants of the participant observation were mostly male ones.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

A. Typologies of Game Talk

After extracting the oral and written terms related to gaming used by the 15 participants, I categorized them based on the categories that were suggested by Wright et al. (2002) and have found that all of the 5 categories apply to my study. Gamers tend to use terms that fit into the 5 categories: Creative Game Talk, Game Conflict Talk, Insult and Distancing Talk, Performance Talk, and Game Technical Talk.

Creative Game Talk (oral terms):

Naming and identity talk:

- OGs (Original Gangsters)

- steamy-ers (people who use the steam; the game app) -streamers (people who play the online and live twitch game)

- Jack – Ace – Atlas – Demickey – Alice - Jeff4827 – Pluto - Ashlit1998 – Lebanoob - Futboy(usernamesadopted in video games)

- Nerds.

Gamers tend to call themselves and each other nerds and take pride for that. Moreover, they take pride for their gaming identity by calling each other by their gaming names (the name they use as a username when they play),even when they interact outside of their game sessions. This shows how gaming is intertwined with their daily lives and more specifically with their identities.

Joking/Word play: He just dabbed on me ('dabbing' is a dance move) - Someone pls sup (Someone please what sup) -Press F to pay respect,FTW!? (For the

win) -w00t/woot (slang used to express happiness) - It happens to the best of 'em -
ROFL (rolling on the floor laughing) - Gone and Toast (when someone is dead) - I can
do that hold my beer -TL DR (too long, didn't read) -Ezpz(easy peasy, meaning very
easy).

Gamers tend to shorten regular words by saying for example "ples" instead of
"please" and they refer to gaming functions in their daily lives such as "Press" a certain
button for a specific purpose as a way of joking. They have even created their own
terms and acronyms to express joy such as FTW and w00t.

Popular culture references:

- I am your father – Join the dark side – Use the force – (from the movie
"Star Wars")

- D'Oh! – Aw, man! – Ay, caramba!(from the television series "The
Simpsons")

- Hello? Is it me you're looking for? (from Lionel Richie's song "Hello")

- Winter is coming – You know nothing, John Snow – The night is dark
and full of terrors(from the television series Game of Thrones)

- What's in the box? (from the movie "Seven")

- Oh my god they killed Kenny (from the television series "South Park")

- Noice/Smort (from the television series "Brooklyn Nine Nine").

Even though the gaming community that is included in my study is a Lebanese
one, they are greatly affected by the westernized popular culture and its references and
it is increasingly becoming embedded in the Lebanese gaming community. Referring to
popular culture references is a big part of the way gamers joke with each other.

However, the fact that the study was conducted at an American University could be the reason why the popular culture references are westernized.

Game Conflict Talk (oral terms):

Cheating accusations: Exploit (someone who uses something when they shouldn't to their own advantage)–Smurf (when someone makes a second fake account so that their score is low and play with noobs and beat everybody) -Hax(short for hacker; someone modifying the game for their advantage).

Police talk: Don't grief (Don't be annoying), Stop grinding (stop doing a repetitive task).

Gamers tend to accuse others of cheating by using game-specific jargon that would sound like gibberish to outsiders. They even give different meanings to words that already exist in the English language such as "smurf", which is known to be an animated blue cartoonfrom "The Smurfs" movie. Somehow, it has turned into an equivalent of a cheater in the gaming world.

Insult/Distancing Talk (oral terms):

Taunting talk:

- N00b (Newbie) /Nub (Non-useful body)/Normie/Manyab (Arabic modification of the word 'Newbie') - Scrub/Pleb (like noob; inexperienced gamer) - Troll/Griefer (someone whose purpose is to annoy other gamers) -PWNED (when someone is defeated) - Garbage/Trash (someone who doesn't know how to play),

- Kys (Kill yourself) **-**Cancer (failure) **-**Salty (annoying)

- Gg ez (get good, you suck) **-**QQ (it comes from the fact that in the game Warcraft II, you can press ALT+Q+Q to exist the game, and its meaning has now turned to telling someone to quit because he is unskilled) -Git gud (telling someone to get better, pointing out to them that you are better than them).

Newbie and its derivations and synonyms are commonly used in the gaming community.Being called an inexperienced player in the game world is such an important concept that it has now several synonyms. It is very common to judge someone who is new to the game, orto mock someone who is actually experienced by telling him that he is new to gaming. Being called a noob in the gaming world is extremely offensive as the sole requirement for someone to be considered as part of the gaming community is to be a "Pro". The Lebanese gamers have even modified the term to Arabic by calling each other 'Manyab', which shows how the gaming language has turned into a limitless language that keeps introducing new and modified words. They also tend to build up a lot of acronyms that are extremely obvious between gamers themselves.

Annoyance talk: Salty/Triggered (getting really angry) -Bad RNG (random number generator, it means the player has bad luck).

This again shows how gamers tend to use words that do exist in the English language but assign theman entire different meaning like Cancer and Salty.

Explicitdiscriminatory talk:

- Shoot the Arabs with a machine gun and a heavy cannon -I hate minorities

- You play like a girl **-**go play with dolls**-** go back to the kitchen

- If you like this game you are gay

This humor employs prejudicial discriminatory stands because it illustrates discrimination on the level of race, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation. The gamers are so much into the game that they get to the point of insulting their own people. Therefore, the effect could be cultural bias, even against one's ethnicity if the game suggests it. Moreover, there is a lot of sexist talk; when guys talk between each other they talk to them as if they are girls, or homosexual, and use it as an insult.

<p style="text-align:center;">*Performance Talk*</p>

Greeting (oral terms): Asta la vista nerds - welcome comic-book nerds -wassup OGs.

This again shows how gamers enjoy referring to one another as nerds and take pride in that.

Exiting game (oral terms): AFK (Away From Keyboard, used when a player is not at their keyboard, not playing).

Gamers get creative with their abbreviations that become instantly commonly used among each them.

Kill Talk (oral and written terms):

- Get the next kill -Kill/slaughter/destroy/eliminate/finish/reap the enemy

- Banish someone to wander earth till the end of time **-**Stomping him to pieces and throwing his body parts around -Devour his soul - Erase him from existence.

- I no-scoped his ass (to shoot with high-precision without the scope).

- He's Rekt/Cooked/Lazered (getting absolutely destroyed/wrecked) - Roasted (when you are getting really beaten).

It is very common among the gamers to talk about killing other players and targets in games and they tend to get very explicit and descriptive when describing how they go about killing in games. They even modify versions of regular words, such as turning wrecked to rekt.

Game strategy talk/teaching talk (oral and written):

- You have to press E -Push start button

- This is the new meta (the new big deal)

- Time to crate - boycott this (withdraw something) -Backtracking (used to describe when a player has to return to a previously encountered location to advance in the game).

- Platinumed a game (get every trophies in a game)

- Gank mid (come and assist me in my(mid) lane)

- You can't pause an online game

- Get respawn (get reborn)

- Camper/camping (someone hiding in a spot and waiting for enemies to come so that they can attack)

- Memed (get memed; someone doing something uncommon really rare, like using a character that isn't good or random and beating someone)

- OHKO (One hit knock out)- OSK (One-shot-kill).

Support talk (oral terms):

- Gg wp (good game well played) -Gl hf (good luck, have fun)**,**

- Juicey (awesome) - Savage (crazy).

Gamers really like to discuss game strategy with other gamers; they like to show to other gamers that they are professional gamers or simply like giving other gamers advice so that they can improve their gaming skills. Although gamers can be really competitive between each other, the gamers who have close bonds with each other tend to be really supportive with one another and complement each other's gaming performance.

Game Technical/External Talk

Lag/ping talk (oral terms): Lag (when your computer slowly responds, mostly because the internet is disconnecting so youcan't play it right) -Ping (everything takes a split second to happen and so it leads to bad things) - It's because of lag - My controller stopped working **-** My ping sucks -Throttled (bad things are happening or getting beaten internet - Raging (when you are really angry) -Lag kills, God I hate my internet, Dot dotdot (loading), Layig (Arabic modification of Lag).

It is very common to complain about the internet connection and how it disrupts the way they play games. Lag is when the internet is slowing down the game and ping is what causes the disruption itself, which in this case is the internet. This problem is something that really annoys the gamers as it disrupts the way they play games.

Genre terms (oral and written terms): FPS: First Person Shooter (games from the firs-person perspective)- *RTS: Real Time Strategy*(a game in which the units and structure are under the player's control in order to secure the map areas*)* - *MMORPG: Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Game –RPG: Role Playing Game*(game in which the player takes on the role of the character in a fictional setting)–

Open world (where the character can freely wander around in a virtual world) -
MOBA: Multiplayer Online Battle Arena(*subgenre* of *RTS*, the player controls one
character in a team in order to beat another team)- *SIM: Simulation* (simulating real
world activities such as a football game*)– Sandbox*(a game in which there are few
limitations for the character)- *Triple-A (AAA* – games produced by a major publisher) –
Magic welchabeb(referring to a game called *Magic: The Gathering) —Platform game
(a*game in which you control an avatar to jump between platforms and obstacles) -
PvP: Player versus player - Point-and-click- PvE (player vs. environment) - *F2P (free
to play).*

Gamers describe games at first by their genre and in the gaming world because
there are so many different types and sub categories within the types. Gamers can get
really creative when describing the genre of a game by mixing different types together
"action-horror" or "interactive horror" and gamers understand immediately what they
mean. For example, when one gamer mentioned that a game's genre was "Magic
welchabeb", everyone understood immediately that it was a game called "Magic" and
its different versions.

Technical game matters (oral and written terms): Healer (a character that
restores allies' health) -DPS (Damage Per Second) –Bots (characters played by the
computer)- DLC: Downloadable content (like more games and guns) -Grinding (doing
repetitive tasks for gameplay advantage) –No Scope (Shooting without the scope) -
NPC: Non-player characters (character that is controlled by the computer)vs. PC: Player
Character-Easter Eggs (secret features in a game)–Experience points (XP)- Gameplay
(how you interact with the game) –Ghosting (when a player has information about
another player that he shouldn't have) – Hit points (HP) –VR (virtual reality) -Boss

fight (fighting with a significant computer-controlled enemy)- Quick-Time Events (QTEs) - SPC: single player content - Melee (any form of close combat), Nerf/nerfed (Nerf means the developers made something less powerful) and Buff(when the developers made something more powerful)- Patch (developer release a file that changes or updates the game - Skill floor (minimum of skill required for a game) -Skill ceiling (the difficulty of reaching the maximum skill of the game) - Bullshot (when publishers misrepresent their game by enhancing their images in their promotional trailers).

The gaming technical terms are limitless and they are implanted in a gamer's mind and this wide vocabulary of gaming jargon will sound alien to non-gamers, gamers even understand each other by saying acronyms of technical terms.

Game character (oral and written terms): Hero of the mushroom kingdom – Super Mario - Princess Peach - Bowser turtle - Pauline, Daisy, Donkey Kong, Diddy Kong, Yoshi, War gods, Zenyatta– Juno - Vesta- Pygmalion Cadmus, Valkyrie, Shadow warriors.

When gamers discuss characters in games, they do so by simply mentioning their name without saying from what game and the other gamers would immediately understand who they are talking about.

Talk about other games (oral and written terms):

- Name of games: *Witcher -WoW, Mortal Kombat, GTA, Resident Evil (Series/5), Grand Theft Auto, Man Hunt 2, Call of Duty - Pub g*;

- Describing other games: Visually-appealing - Cool graphics – I wish there were more games like *WoW* – Excited for the new game to come out – The hacking mechanic is awesome, The latest build doesn't look as good as the first demo, I

knew it would be a load of overhyped crap, It looks lovely in HD there is no creativity in this game, You can grab it super cheap now, This game has better graphics, They should add online multiplayer.

Gamers like to discuss other games; their worlds, characters and gameplay and engage in debates about whether these games are fun to play, if their visuals are good, if it is easy or not, immersive or boring.

B. Results And Analysis: Survey

All of the questions in the survey were multiple choice, with the option to choose from one to all of the answers available, and so the percentages are all taken from the 30 participants. Before conducting the survey, I piloted itto 5 student gamers at AUB who were not part of the study to make sure that the study is relevant, comprehensible and appropriate.

Regarding how gamers would describe someone who doesn't know the gaming language, 73% said that they would call him/her a 'Noob', 10% would call him/her a 'N00b', and 23% would call him/her a 'Newbie'.
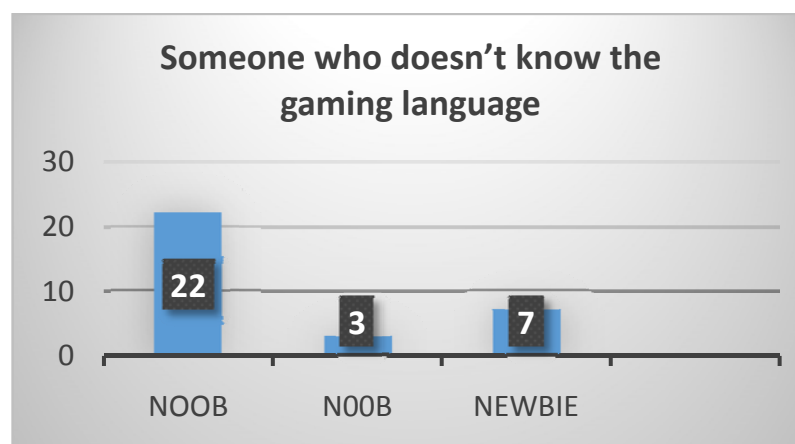

Figure 1: Names given to someone who doesn't know the gaming language

This clearly shows that most gamers use the exclusive and modified version of 'Newbie', which the gaming jargon 'Noob', whether it is in its normal form or in its leetspeak one 'N00b'. To mock someone for being new or inexperienced as a gamer is a big cultural element in the gaming community.

When they were asked if they regularly use any of the listed gaming jargon, 17% use "Grokking", 20% use "Greebling",20% use "Gib", 37% used "Pros", 37% use "BFG", 23% use "TK", and 57% use "RPG". However, 37% said that they did not use any of the terms that were listed, but that they use other gaming jargon, such as "GG" (Good game) and "FPS" (First Person Shooter).
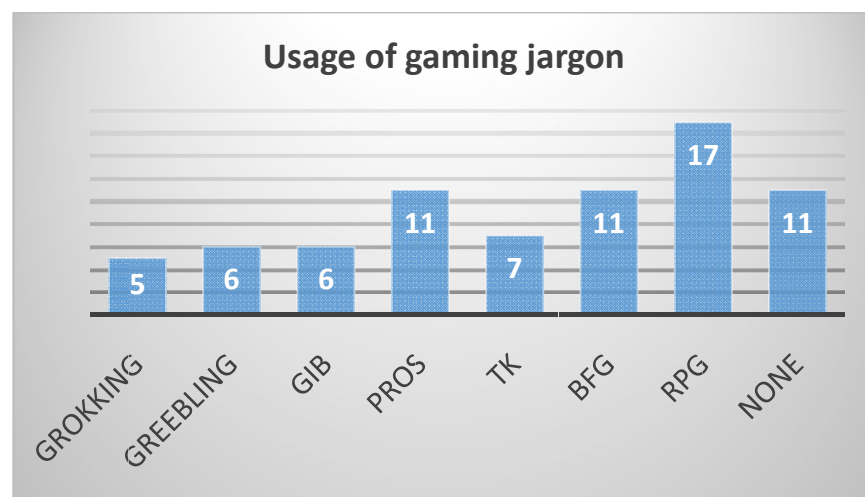

Figure 2: Numbers of participants using the various jargon categories

This demonstrates how gamers differ in their usage of gaming jargon. Therefore, it is not really the choice of specific gaming jargon that is similar among the participants, but the use of gaming jargon in general.

Regarding which gaming language features they use, 83% use 'Creative game talk', 47% use 'Game conflict talk', 47% use 'Insult/distancing talk', 73% use 'Performance talk' and 83% use 'game technical talk'.
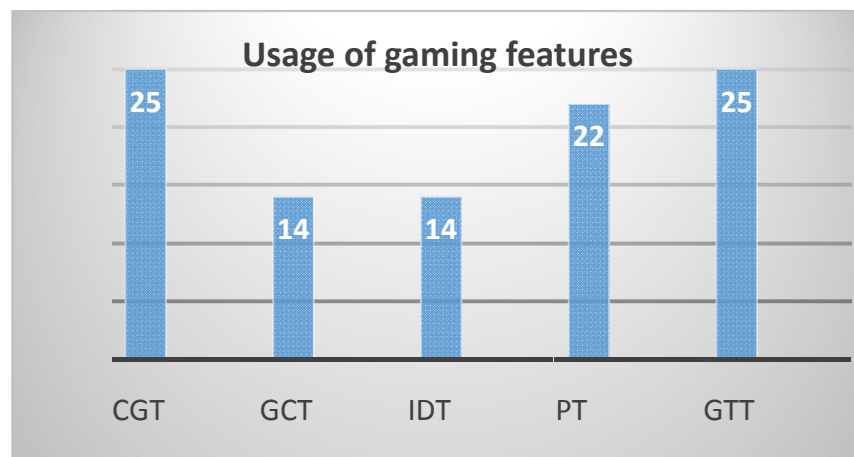

Figure 3: Number of participants using various typologies of talk

This illustrates the extent of excessive usage of talk related to creativity (joking), and game technical matters. Moreover, 43% of these gamers said that they use all of them, which highlights the variety of types of talk present among gamers and its exclusivity to the gaming community.

Most importantly, when asked what speaking the gaming language in the gaming community provides, 70% said 'creating an enjoyable gaming experience', 60% said 'building and maintaining a strong sense of community between members', 67% said 'making friends', 40% said 'making enemies', 70% said 'increased interaction/communication with other players', 50% said 'boosting gaming status', 54% said 'creating a gaming identity', 60% said 'gaining gaming knowledge' 57% said 'establishing close bonds with other gamers', 57% said 'feeling connected to the

gaming world' and 50% said 'a feeling of pride'.17% of the gamers said that it provides

all of the options.
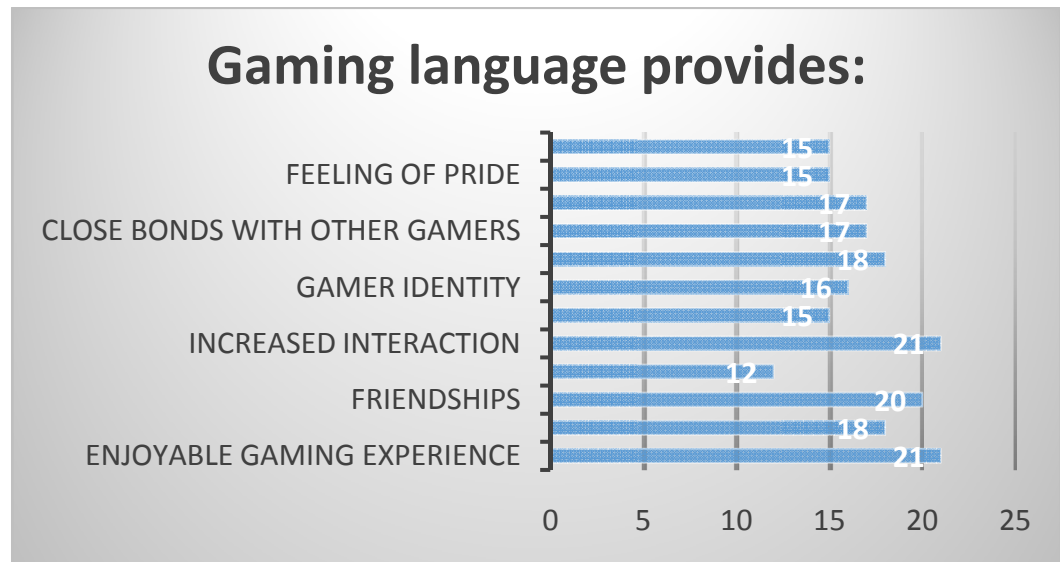
Figure 4: Functions of gaming language

This shows how speaking and knowing the gaming language plays a big role in

the gaming community. Although it can have disadvantages such as making enemies, its

advantages outweigh them.

The results of the survey show that it makes their gaming experience more

enjoyable because they feel connected to the gaming community and gaming world, it

helps with building and sustaining good friendships with other gamers, and it boosts

gamers' self-esteem because it provides them with gaming knowledge, credibility and

more importantly a gamer identity. Consequently, it is clear that everything that

knowing the gaming language provides contributes to the building and sustaining of the

gamer's identity and the gaming community.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

A. Digital Media And Language

This study illustrates the prominent effect of digital media on language because the digital gaming world has created a gaming culture that embodies a gaming community and a gaming language. According to Coleman (2010), whenever people interact with digital media, there will be remakings of a range of cultural representations, experiences and identities. Digital media has entered the heart of everyday life with the digital gadgets that are vital in today's world. Digital artifacts have led to the building of new collectivities such as gamers whose sense of self, vocation and group sociabilities are shaped by digital technologies. This is what makes digital cultures a compelling object for ethnographic inquiry (Coleman, 2010). According to Baron (2008), the new digital forms significantly affect both the linguistic and social dimensions of human interactions because they are prevalent in people's use of language, social interactions and identity construction.

However, because of the excess of digital interaction that is being done with gradual written exchanges (instant text messages), there is no more distinction between important and unimportant forms of language. Baron believes that this poses a threat because people will have difficulty understanding each other and there will no longer be standardized forms of written language. This generation has turned into the "whatever" generation because of the spread of "linguistic whateverism" (Baron, 2008). This is controlled by people's new attitude towards speech and writing, which is an

indifference to the need for consistency in linguistic usage. And so digital media is making language, whether spoken or written, in a constant state of flux.

B. Gaming Language

One of the most prominent cultural element within the gaming community is the gaming language that is being built by its members. According to Crawford, Gosling and Light (2011), because of video games, different patterns of language, interaction, norms and community emerge in and around them, especially MMORPGS because they develop creative ways of communicating. These new ways of interacting are created by both the game and the gaming community through their repetitive interactions that lead to the creation of acceptable and appropriate behavior and social structures. Squire and Steinkuehler (2006) state that fluency in the gaming language is necessary in such communities because it is what distinguishes a 'newbie' from a 'beta vet'. Salen (2008) lists various gaming literacies such as word-building, learning to navigate the complex system of a game (from game guides, forums, peer to peer learning, etc.), negotiating with other gamers the demands of play (knowing the social norms of the community), and learning how to interact within a multiplayer setting, where knowledge is shared and collective.

There are so many terms that are flourishing in the gaming language and Squire and Steinkuehler (2006) claim that gamers talk in this way not only to communicate with other gamers, but also "to signal the player's status as an old-timer in the community" (p. 5). New linguistic forms emerge because, when playing games, the language that they can use is limited to specific constraints. Gamers have to talk quickly while playing because they have tight constraints of small text windows. Not only do

gamers come up with new terms, but also new terms emerge within the game. Games tend to introduce numerous new game terminology that become part of the emergent gaming culture (Squire and Steinkuehler, 2006). For example, the term 'death blow' that signifies a final strike done by a non-player character that ends a player character's life, and then the term turned into the abbreviated past-tense verb 'DBd' as in "you'reDBd, friend". The emergence of all of these terms "signal and reflect the emergence of a unique cultural space" (p. 6). Some terms are used when there is a lot of controversy and gamers engage in complex argumentation, like "grinding", which is when a player engages in repetitive behavior to gain experience/power so that they move on to another skill. It has other similar terms such as 'farming', 'minimaxing', 'powerleveling'.

C. Diversity Of Gaming Language Types Of Talk

The five categories that were involved in the study show how diverse gamers' talk is. It can shift from serious talk such as giving gaming tips and discussing technical game mattersto silly talk such as joking around, using popular culture references and insulting other gamers.Peterson (2012) analyzed the linguistic and social interaction of four gamers while they were playing a MMORPG game. He found that their interaction consisted of use of politeness involving greetings, small talk, humor, informal language and leave-takings.Moreover, the reasons for these different types of talk were in order to strengthen their collaborative interpersonal relationship that is based on reciprocity, friendship and teamwork. He also noticed that the gamers were able to sustain intersubectivity because they were always listening to each other and giving each other feedback and assistance related to game tasks. The categories and terms that are present

in this study depict how the gaming community reinforces creativity in its language, whether it is on the level of humor, violence or strategy talk. This common way of talking strengthens the building and maintaining of a strong sense of community between its members.

D. Creativity Of The Gaming Language

This study illustrates how much gamers can get creative with their way of creating jokes, acronyms and abbreviations. Wright et al. (2002) believe that creative game talk "reveals the complex manner in which game technology is used to mediate popular culture and social interactions" (p.4).Creative game talk is a wide category that embodies a range of different categories: names, naming, identity talk, joking, irony, word play and popular culture uses and references. Salen (2007) claims that the increasing exposure to the dynamic and rule-based systems within games allow gamers to develop creative and improvisational ways of expression and speaking. The excessive amount of gamers' engagement in the games leads to the development of stylized forms of interaction because gamers follow the rules but also push against them because "testing the limits of the system in often unique and powerful ways" (p. 307). Kalima (2007) investigated the most common word formation processes that created new words on Internet gaming forums and found that the most common ones were acronyms and clipping (creates new words by reducing already existing words in length). There is another word formation process called shifts that was present in the findings which is words that are 'recycled' in a language and return with a different meaning. For example, the word 'juicy' was originally used to describe food or rumors, but in the gaming world it is used to describe something in a game as 'awesome'.

A gamer's name is very important in the gaming world. According to Rhoads (2007), when anyone starts playing as a beginner, he is given the name 'player', but if it is not changed with time, his name will be frowned upon by the experienced players. This is because given names in the gaming industry is a symbolic marker for one's intent, status, age, etc. For example, those with names that refer to body parts or sexual acts appear as immature and teenagers. This could explain why the participants of this study like to call each other by their gaming usernames and take pride in it.

Creative game talk is also manifested through humor and word play. Playing games is not just about how good a player you are, but also about the player's ability to joke and have a sense of humor. A big part of their discussion is also about commenting about the map of the game and its designs. Popular culture references are also very popular among the players, such as the "doh!" that is used in the television show "The Simpsons". The gaming world is a place that is full of rules and conventions that are reachable only for the experienced players. When playing games and understanding the rules and meaning of the game, the players understand the meaning of having fun, which is linked to the creative actions that are used to enhance the enjoyment.

E. Guiding Players By Giving Strategic Tips

One of the principal drives that helps with building and maintaining a strong sense of community between the gamers is how the fact that they give each other gaming tips. According to Cheng and Mcfarlane (2006), the interaction that occurs outside of gameplay is as significant as the game itself. Gamers want to join affinity groups with shared game interests so that they can gather knowledge and expertise, which are strengthened and deepened through the interactions between the members of

the group.A big part of gaming culture is to give strategic gaming advice to other gamers. Sun, Lin and Ho (2003) analyzed the role of 'gaming tips' and the 'gaming tip cultures' in the gaming community. They associated it to a 'gift exchange' and defined a gaming tip as "a piece of documented information that helps recipients understand a specific game component or to overcome a game barrier" (p.2).

Gamers want social networking and approval and this is why they enjoy exchanging tips and guides on the internet with other gamers, which in turn greatly affects their game play. Sun et al. found that gamers have a need for recognition and so they constantly demonstrate their gaming knowledge by giving gaming tips to other gamers. Abrams (2015) focused on how collaboration and knowledge sharing are cultural practices present in the gaming discourse community. She discusses how the interaction between gamers, whether in the real or virtual world, is a part of the gaming experience and gamers value peer support that improves their gaming performance. She claims that this sponsorship constitutes the gaming community's cultural identity. According to Abrams (2015), the gaming language is viewed as a privileged literacy practice because it is only understandable to 'digital natives'. This new form of language shows how a new form of knowledge is being constructed along with technology, and it is a form that is entirely foreign to 'digital immigrants'.

F. Gaming Language And Identity

Being fluent in the gaming language helps gamers embody the gamer identity because the way people speak is a way of creating an identity. This in turn makes them feel connected to the gaming world (Jedruszczak, 2013). According to Jedruszczak (2013), video games are a popular form of entertainment that allows its players to create

players and worlds for them to immerse themselves in. The player's experience in the gaming world is mostly based on identity building because gamers make their own choices regarding who they want to be and what they want to do. Therefore, video games provides a way of reflecting real-world stories and identities. Just as language is used by people to express their identity in the real world, it is also used in video games to express the identities of their characters in the games.Burn and Carr (2006) believe that the gamer takes on "a new and different identity, a 'representation' of themselves, this can be better understood as an extension of our identity" (as cited in Crawford et al., 2011, p. 7). This is because gamers have the complete freedom to choose their identities in the online worlds, simply naming your character has a huge effect on gamers because it alters the way they perceive their choices and personalities.

This study shows that the gamers take pride in being 'gamers' and 'nerds'. However, according to Yates and Littleton (1999), there are social costs to being a gamer because of the penalties associated with being characterized as a 'geek' or a 'loner'. They feel socially disvalued because of the stereotypes such as the fact that gaming leads to addiction, social isolation and impaired social skills. However, the gamers that were present in this study showed the opposite and illustrate how a community and culture can play a big role in affecting the way its members perceive themselves.

G. Enriching Gaming Experience

According to Yates and Littleton (1999), "gaming needs to be viewed as an activity taking place in cultural niches that arise in the complex interaction between games, gamers and gaming cultures" (p. 566). Being part of the gaming community

allows its members to enjoy a wonderful and enriching gaming experience with each other as they all share the community's cultural elements. This is because the player's experience in the gaming world is mostly based on interaction: with the game world through the game mechanics, the non-player characters in the game world andthe other players within the same game world (Jedruszczak, 2013). According to Godwin-Jones (2005), the next generation's increasing video gaming has proven to have a lot of benefits because it improves: computer literacy, communicative skills and community building. Moreover, it contributes to identity creation (through avatars), collaborative learning (through networking and developing game play strategies) and even mentoring (by helping other gamers with their gaming strategies).

According to Salen (2008), the concept of gaming goes beyond games; it constitutes the combination of activities, practices, knowledge and literacies. It requires its players to be fluent in its literacies that are multimodal, immersive and participatory in nature. To be a gamer one must be capable of risk taking on the level of creation, navigation, problem solving and awareness of rule structures. According to Salen (2008), "games are more than contexts for the production of fun and deliver just-in-time learning, the development of specialist language, and experimentation with identity and point of view" (p. 14). They are leading video gamers "into productive literacies, social communities, and digital rich identities" (p. 14).

H. Gaming Language's Explicit Talk

There is a lot of explicit discriminatory talk in the gaming language which can be seen through the sexist, homophobic and racist talk. According to Kimmel (2008), the gaming world is a place white men perceive as a masculine space for expression and

bonding. They also believe they can establish dominance and perform masculinity and that the presence of women threaten their ability to engage in these practices (as cited in Richard, 2014). However, according to a study published by the Internet Advertising Bureau in 2014, 52% of gamers are women and this number is gradually increasing (as cited in Jayanth, 2014). The industry is not aware of that and that is why female characters and creators are extremely absent. Women have always been gamers, especially the mobile games industry that have been driven by a female consumer base in recent years (Jayanth, 2014). Nevertheless, the misconception that gamers are solely male still exists. Moreover, because women and minorities are underrepresented in video games, when they are present they tend to be either highly stereotyped or when it comes to women only highly sexualized (Richard, 2014). Salter and Blodgett (2012) believe that the problem of hypermasculinity and sexism are extremely present in the gaming community and that "the hypermasculine discourse encourages the overt privileging of masculinity over femininity and discourages women from engaging in gendered discourse within the community" (p. 401). Richard claimsthat expectations of gender and sexuality are widespread and are cultural constructs that invade the gaming world. The gaming world is set to be claimed as a place for masculine and heterosexual dominance and this poses a threat to everyone involved.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

This study explored the linguistic jargon ofthe student gaming community at AUB and its role in the construction of the gamers'identity, social interaction and community membership. The methods that were used in this study were participant observation, corpus analysis and surveys that targetedstudent gaming community at AUB. The results of this study show that the gaming community has formed their own gaming language that is full of various typologies of talk and culture. The gaming community and gaming language are vibrant and in constant flux, which in turn stimulates linguistic changes and this affects the gamers on the level of individual expression and collective identity building (Danescu-Niculescu-Mizil et al., 2013). This illustrates the complex interchange between community-level and individual-level linguistic change.The limitation of this research topic is the lack of research on gaming in Lebanon and on gaming language in general. However, the widespread popularity of the gaming community phenomenon has made it extremely worthwhile to analyze how the gaming language they use is manifested and whether it has a social and cultural effect on them or not. Gaming is widely dominating the world and is even significantly present in Lebanon and in its media and thus, there is a crucial need for research on gaming in Lebanon. The building of the gaming language is still at the very beginning because there are a lot more gaming terms that are constantly developing in the gamers' lexicon.

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APPENDIX

Survey

<u>For each of the questions below, choose the correct answer(s)</u>

1. **How would you describe someone who doesn't know the gaming language?**
   o Noob
   o N00b
   o Newbie

2. **Do you regularly use any of these terms?**
   o Grokking
   o Greebling
   o Gib
   o Pros
   o TK
   o BFG
   o RPG

3. **Which of thesegaming language features do you use?**
   o Creative game talk (such as naming, word play, joking, popular culture references)
   o Game conflict talk (such as cheating accusation)
   o Insult/distancing talk (such as annoyance or angry talk)
   o Performance talk (such as blaming someone, apologies for failure, game strategy talk)
   o Game technical talk (such as technical game matters, map talk, request for information)

4. **Does speaking the gaming language in the gaming community provide:**
   o Creating an enjoyable experience
   o Building and maintaining a strong sense of community between members
   o Making friends
   o Making enemies
   o Increased interaction/communication with other players
   o Boosting gaming status
   o Creating a gaming identity
   o Gaining gaming knowledge
   o Establishing close bonds with other gamers
   o Feeling connected to the gaming world
   o A feeling of pride