

國立臺灣師範大學英語學系
碩 士 論 文
Master's Thesis
Department of English
National Taiwan Normal University

英雄實踐聯盟：從語言學角度探討大型多人線上
遊戲玩家的社會認同

League of Practice: Identity as Linguistic
Construction in a Massively Multiplayer Online Game

指導教授：蘇 席 瑤

Advisor: Dr. Hsi-yao Su

研 究 生：張 哲 瑋

中華民國一零六年一月

January 2017

摘要

本研究以社會語言學的觀點探討大型多人線上遊戲 (Massively Multiplayer Online Game) 中參與者們是如何透過言談以創建一虛擬的實踐社群 (Community of Practice)，又團體中是如何協調彼此的角色定位或身份認同 (Identity)。科技變遷，網際網路早已成為許多人不可或缺的生活伴侶，而大型多人線上遊戲尤其是當今文化中主流的社交場域。儘管如此，該互動平台卻甚少於學術界探討；在網路論壇和即時通訊應用程式漸漸為社會語言學者關切的同時，令人好奇的是，通常被視為休閒活動的線上遊戲是否亦乘載著豐富的社會訊息。

本論文採人種誌研究法 (Ethnography)，研究者以「田野調查」的方式深入線上遊戲世界，共同參與該虛擬社會中的活動，並觀察紀錄玩家之間的互動模式。語料來源為英雄聯盟 (*League of Legends*) 此款於全球風靡已久的多人在線競技遊戲 (Multiplayer Online Battle Arena)，共蒐集了一百場遊戲間玩家在對話窗口的互動情形。從玩家們的言語行為 (Speech Act)，和其所透露的立場表達 (Stancetaking)，我們得以推衍出該實踐社群的成員是藉何種互為主體性的策略 (Tactics of Intersubjectivity) 以認同自我及他人的社會角色。

身份認同的概念在以往被看作是個體生理或心理素質的體現，直到後現代主義時期成為能夠透過言談建構的社會意涵，進而發展為二十一世紀的學者們口中，社會互動及意識型態編織下的結晶 (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004, 2005)。本研究以此對社會認同之現代觀點為跳板，視線上遊戲中玩家們之間的言談為相互定義及塑造個體社會形象的重要媒介，以進一步探究該社群網路中的人際與社會動態。

研究結果指出，英雄聯盟玩家為一實踐社群的假設不僅可從該團體中對彼此的行為規範 (Norms of Conduct) 見端倪，成員們之間所使用的語言亦是有力的證據。不管是就語言形式或功能來看，英雄聯盟的玩家似乎有著一套共通且獨特的用語，外界的人不易理解。在此社群中最常見的語言溝通模式包含戰略消息通報、情緒反應、情勢分析、遊戲表現評論，以及行動策劃；大部份的成員尤其會用命令的口吻要求隊友配合執行任務，或因為遊戲中的挫折而責難他人，說明著他們習慣用較具攻擊性 (Aggression) 的態度來展現自己相對專業的玩家身份。值得注意的是，本研究所討論具攻擊性的行為表現不應標籤於全體的英雄聯盟玩

家，而需被視為區辨該社群內一次團體的重要因素，此類型的玩家視遊戲內建的聊天系統為遊玩時行使社會權力 (Social Power) 的最佳途徑。

本研究試圖藉著對言談詳細的描述來帶出線上遊戲玩家遊玩的過程中社會意義的協調 (Negotiation of Meaning)，包括該實踐社群理念與目標的共建，以及成員間社會地位的相互認同。我們從調查中得知線上遊戲對某些人來說並非如想像般「休閒」，反而牽涉嚴肅的人際議題，也就是說，線上遊戲這個社交平台可以被看作是玩家與他人、更是與自我對話的學習基地。

關鍵詞：大型多人線上遊戲、實踐社群、身份認同、言語行為、立場表達、互為主體性策略



ABSTRACT

As technology thrives, the Internet has become a life partner for almost each person in this modern generation; we also cannot deny that massively multiplayer online games (MMOGs) play an important role in social networks for some of us. Despite that, this social platform has barely been touched upon in academia. While online forums and instant messengers have been heatedly discussed among many sociolinguists, little attention has been paid to the question whether massively multiplayer online games, well known as a type of leisure activities, are also imbued with social meaning. From the perspective of sociocultural linguistics, the present study aims to examine how online game “inhabitants” construct a community of practice and negotiate social positions and identities through discourse.

We follow the ethnographic method of conducting fieldwork, immersing ourselves in the online game world through participation in gameplay activities and observing participants interaction with each other. I chose the Multiplayer Online Battle Arena (MOBA) game *League of Legends (LoL)* to be my data source, because it is one of the most popular MMOGs around the world in recent years; I recorded one hundred matches of the game and focused my analysis on the textual communication in their game chats. It is expected that the speech acts performed through the exchange of talk could be interpreted as stancetaking moves that implicate on the intersubjectivity tactics used by the players to establish identity relations.

The concept of identity had previously been seen as a representation of an individual’s physical or mental character; it was not until the era of postmodernism that it started to be treated as interrelated with discourse, which opens a channel to the 21st century view that identity is a product of both micro-empirical interaction and ideology. This viewpoint serves as a springboard for the present study, which treats

the game chats as an important medium for the co-construction of players' personas and thus their interpersonal dynamics.

The result of the study shows that the sense of community of practice characterizing *LoL* players can be evident in not only the members' shared norms of conduct but also their use of language. It seems that *LoL* players as a social group have a specialized register for communication that is esoteric to outsiders, with regard to linguistic forms and pragmatic functions. The communicative practices that are most frequently seen in the community include tactical reports, expressions of feelings, analyses of the current situations, appraisals of previous plays, and plans of actions. Among them, most players are involved in the use of directives for asking for allies' cooperation and negative appraisals against others' bad performances, which shows that they are used to taking aggressive stances to display their professional gamer identities. What is worthy of notice is that such aggressive verbal behavior should not be over-generalized to all *LoL* players but serve to distinguish a subgroup within them, who tend to exert their social power via the in-game messaging service.

The current study attempts to bring out the negotiation of social meaning among a group of MMOG players, including the joint enterprise and its members' intersubjectivity. It seems that, for some, playing MMOGs is not so much a leisure activity as a way of life where they engage in serious thought on the matter of identity; that is, an MMOG is not only a platform for players' mutual communication but also a social learning system for their communication with themselves about what kinds of gamers they shall present.

Keywords: massively multiplayer online games, community of practice, identity, speech act, stancetaking, tactics of intersubjectivity

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This has been a happy journey, yet with torment of all kinds. I stepped into the field of academia with pride and drive, but my confidence has ever been shaken so badly. Honestly speaking, these four years of study are not at all concentrated; they are interwoven with one year of part-time teaching, one year of military service, and any minute of uneasiness caused by teaching jobs preparation. The journey has lasted so long that I sometimes forget what I set out to do in here. Without the love others have given to me, I would never be able to go this far.

For starters, I would like to show my thanks to my dearest instructor Professor Hsi-Yao Su, who I have known since my undergraduate days in the department. Her mind-blowing lectures on Language and Gender, Sociolinguistics, and Identity and Language Ideologies inspired and further motivated me to become a sociolinguist. Special gratitude goes to her encouragement and support during the hard times, as well as her belief in my ability to carry out a pioneering study. Because of her, my work could really reflect who I am and what I deem to be meaningful in this world.

I would also like to appreciate the help from my thesis committee members, Professor Miao-Hsia Chang and Professor Hong-Chi Shiau, with regard to their incisive comments and useful suggestions that brought my work to the next level of significance. Particularly, I want to thank Professor Miao-Hsia Chang for the effort she has put in to make my research better position in the field of linguistics. My gratitude also goes to Professor Hong-Chi Shiau for his generous sharing of ideas and materials that have broadened my intellect within the media and communication discipline.

I shall take the opportunity to show my appreciation to the professors of the English Department at National Taiwan Normal University (NTNU) who have always

been supportive of my career goals. I thank Professor Lindsey N.H. Chen for being willing to instruct me in conducting a cultural study on youth slang when I was just an undergraduate wandering about the future; I thank her for letting me pluck up the courage to pursue academic excellence in the field of linguistics. My sincerest gratitude also goes to Professor Jen-I Li, who prepped me for my first ever research presentation at an academic conference; I appreciate her encouragement and faith in me throughout the graduate school years. I want to furthermore deliver my thanks to Professor Yuh-Show Cheng, who has been accompanying me at many times of decision making on this treacherous journey.

If there is any bit of pride I have in this study, I will give a great part of the credit to the company of my friends in all these days. I thank my fellow graduate classmates Jennifer Hsu and John Lu for their academic and emotional support when we together embarked on the life as both part-time students and part-time teachers. I would also like to thank my study partners Perry Lin, Sheng-Yu Kao, and Simon Shih for their positive and hard-working aura; this work is a memento for the valuable time we spent with each other. Finally, I am thankful for the love and care from my best friends Anita Chiang, John Lu, Vian Hsu, and Ying Chou. None of the hardship would turn into joy and sense of achievement if it weren't for them.

I want to dedicate the last lines to my beloved family; I cannot imagine how lucky I am to have them in this lifetime of mine. I thank my father Chien-Pang Chang for his trying to become a better parent; I love him for accepting me the way I am, instead of turning me into someone else. I thank my grandma A-Yeh Yang for her delicious meals as always, which have made me healthy enough to fight off the obstacles ahead. I am grateful to my cousin, Jerry Chou, whose brotherhood with me is one of the things I cherish the most in my whole life; all the joy we shared together has given me the strength to carry on with my dream. My indescribable gratitude goes

to my “mother” Su-Huei Chang for walking me through all those trials with her benevolence and generosity; the outpouring love and care I receive from her has always been the source of my power to live a life where nothing is impossible.

For all the people who have helped me in regards to the study or made me who I am today, I love you from the bottom of my heart. This thesis is heartily dedicated to my mom, who took the lead to heaven years ago; thank you for always being by my side, my beautiful angel.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHINESE ABSTRACT	i
ENGLISH ABSTRACT	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	viii
LIST OF TABLES.....	x
LIST OF FIGURES	xi
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Overview.....	1
1.2 Motivation and Research Questions	3
1.3 Outline of the Study	7
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW	8
2.1 Theorizing Identity.....	8
2.1.1 Identity in the Flow of History	9
2.1.2 Discourse and Identity	10
2.1.3 Community of Practice	17
2.1.4 Identity and Its Relevant Concepts	22
2.2 Identity in Cyberspace	26
2.2.1 Online Identity	27
2.2.2 Massively Multiplayer Online Gamer Identity	33
2.3 Summary	40
CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY	42
3.1 Data Collection	42
3.1.1 Why <i>League of Legends</i> ?.....	42
3.1.2 Virtual Ethnography.....	46
3.2 Data Analysis	53
3.2.1 An Integrative Approach.....	53
3.2.2 Practices of Language Use.....	57
CHAPTER 4 ANALYSIS OF IN-GAME TEXTUAL INTERACTION	61
4.1 <i>League of Legends</i> Gamers as a Community of Practice	62
4.2 Linguistic Practices of <i>League of Legends</i> Gamers.....	71
4.2.1 Morpho-Syntax	73
4.2.2 Youth Slang.....	76
4.2.3 Offensive Slang.....	81
4.2.4 Computer-Mediated Communication Slang	87
4.2.5 Massively Multiplayer Online Game Jargons	95
4.2.6 Typos and Wrong Input Language.....	111

4.2.7 Implication for Identity	113
4.3 Communicative Practices of <i>League of Legends</i> Gamers	114
4.3.1 Tactical Reports	115
4.3.2 Expressions of Feelings	118
4.3.3 Analyses of the Current Situations	124
4.3.4 Appraisals of Previous Plays	131
4.3.5 Plans of Actions	144
4.3.6 Frequencies of Use	154
4.4 Identity Categories of <i>League of Legends</i> Gamers	158
CHAPTER 5 ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEW RESPONSES AND DATA DISCUSSION	198
5.1 <i>League of Legends</i> Gamers as a Community of Practice (Revisited).....	198
5.2 The Ostensible Marriage between Discourse and Identity	200
5.3 The Contextualization of Identity Work	206
CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION	218
6.1 Summary of the Study	218
6.2 Significance of the Study	222
6.3 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research	224
BIBLIOGRAPHY	227



LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. The stereotypical matching of locations in charge to team positions and champion roles	65
Table 2. The norms of practice expected for the five team positions	67
Table 3. Linguistic identity practices of <i>League of Legends</i> gamers	72
Table 4. Jargons of game mechanics used by <i>League of Legends</i> players.....	99
Table 5. Collocate jargons of game mechanics used by <i>League of Legends</i> players	105
Table 6. Jargons of player ideologies in <i>League of Legends</i>	107
Table 7. Slang meanings of <i>GG</i> , <i>lei</i> , and <i>OP</i> in <i>League of Legends</i> and real life.....	110
Table 8. Examples of tactical reports	116
Table 9. Examples of analyses of the current situations (single turns)	124
Table 10. The implied suggestions of the analyses of the current situations in Games No. 29 and 58.....	128
Table 11. The possible meanings of the analyses of the current situations in Games No. 14, 32, 63, 69, and 92 as acts of impoliteness	130
Table 12. Examples of commissives as plans of actions in <i>League of Legends</i> game chat.....	145
Table 13. Examples of directives as plans of actions in <i>League of Legends</i> game chat	147

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. A screenshot of <i>League of Legends</i> gameplay.....	49
Figure 2. A zooming-up chat window during <i>League of Legends</i> gameplay.....	49
Figure 3. Interrelationships among community of practice, stancetaking, and tactics of intersubjectivity	55
Figure 4. The zooming-up minimap from the screenshot of gameplay before Excerpt 2 conversation	76
Figure 5. The numbers of players (out of the 400 informers) who participate in the communicative practices of tactical reports, expressions of feelings, analyses of the current situations, appraisals of previous plays, and plans of actions	155
Figure 6. The numbers of players (out of the 400 informers) who participate in the communicative practices of positive appraisals of previous plays, negative appraisals of previous plays, promises of actions, and directions to actions	157
Figure 7. A screenshot of the team getting ready for the game by positioning themselves in the key passages on the map	161
Figure 8. A screenshot of the bottom laners helping the jungler kill the Krugs	162
Figure 9. A screenshot of the enemy champions invading the team's home base after the losing team fight	172

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

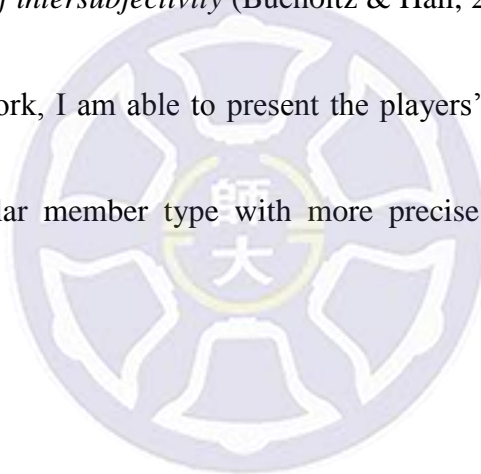
It has become a platitude that social technology is growing massively in the early twenty-first century. Concomitant with the digital revolution is the development of computer-simulated reality on the Internet. This virtual environment provides users with a platform for social interaction and, more importantly, a sense of presence in another dimension of the world. In most virtual realities, people are required to create user accounts, with which they share with others their thoughts and respond to others' posts. Since it is not necessary that the users display their "true" identities there, some seem to be able to step out their comfort zones to show off whatever they have got or to communicate with people in a bolder way. In other words, the constructed persona in the cyberspace could be a very different one from its real-life correspondence. Maybe because of this, virtual or online identities, together with their intellectual property and reputations built online, start to be taken seriously and protected by

laws.¹ This sense of integrity attributed to online identities themselves, with no reference to the real-world users, has also expanded a new research area in the field of sociology and anthropology where what matters is the selves in a “network” of relationships within the boundaries of particular virtual worlds.

Among virtual realities for entertainment, massively multiplayer online games (MMOGs) are the category that has dominated the market for at least twenty years, executed from network-capable platforms from personal computers to smartphones and other mobile devices in recent days. Although the popularity of mobile games appears to gradually outgrow that of console games, there are still some games on the PC that hold their positions in the market of the younger generation. The multiplayer online battle arena game *League of Legends* is the most successful example in early 2010s, not only in the West but also in Taiwan. From the perspective of discourse-based ethnography, the present study aims to explore the emergence of online identities from computer-mediated communication (CMC) found in *League of Legends*. I take *League of Legends* as a *community of practice* (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) whose members construct their characters’ identities as intersubjective

¹ In May 2016, a Taiwanese player of the online video game *League of Legends* was sued for maliciously calling another player *naocan* ‘moron.’ He was punished for committing defamation on the grounds of the fact that the avatars’ social statuses on the Internet are also built on interpersonal relationships and reputations managed and maintained with great effort.

to each other, through the social practice of textual interaction. For this end, I choose the in-game chat logs as my conversational database for analysis, which are gathered from one hundred matches of *League of Legends*. Along with detailed description of how the participants utter and interpret language, including its forms and pragmatic meanings, I bring their *stancetaking* (e.g. Du Bois, 2007; Englebretson, 2007; Jaffe, 2009; Ochs, 1996) moves to the level of acts of identity and community membership in the terms of *tactics of intersubjectivity* (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004, 2005). By resorting to this identity framework, I am able to present the players' claims to themselves or others being a particular member type with more precise vocabulary and clearer organization.



1.2 Motivation and research questions

Although MMOGs have been treated as complex worlds for social learning in prior studies from an ethnographic stance, self-categorization or identity has rarely been the focus, not to mention reference to identity theories and their use on linguistic data. This niche opens up unanswered questions about how identity emerges from the specific discourse of *League of Legends*.

For starters, it is interesting to see whether the aggregate of *LoL* players can be defined as a community of practice, given the players' regular interactions during the mutual engagement in *LoL* gaming. If it can, then concerns with identity here could be seen as matters of membership, which have been meaningfully addressed in sociological terms. Next, in line with the premise that *LoL* community is a community of practice, we linguists need to tease out which linguistic levels of structure and use are of great importance in the indexical processes of instantiating gamer identity, those treated as part of the community's competence that distinguishes members from outsiders. These two main research gaps are rephrased in the form of questions below:

1. Can the *LoL* community be regarded as a community of practice? If yes, how?
2. How or through what linguistic forms and functions is membership in the *LoL* community of practice indexed?

When noting the idiosyncrasies of *LoL* game world, one may also be curious about whether they facilitate or limit means of communication among the players and therefore shape the presentations of selves there. This interference of the contextual factors in *LoL* is three-fold. First, owing to the mediation of computer networks, there is a possibility that the features of CMC such as its hyperpersonal nature would

cultivate identity or relational work very different from that resulting from face-to-face interaction. Second, MMOG players constitute a virtual community whose existence relies on not only their textual negotiation of common interests, needs and norms of conduct, but also their joint practice of gaming. This difference from other types of communities in the cyberspace could pose intriguing questions as to whether the social practice of gaming serves an additional reference point for players' intersubjectivity in MMOGs like *LoL*. Lastly, compared to the most studied MMOGs in the previous literature like *EverQuest*, *World of Warcraft*, and *Lineage* such massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPGs), *League of Legends* is characterized by one-shot groups of players who have much less anticipation of future interaction and partnerships, because of its Multiplayer Online Battle Arena (MOBA) genre of gameplay. Considering this point, it is quite possible that the participants' identity relations with each other are contextualized by the game world but in a completely different way. These concerns with the environment of *LoL* as an intermediary between discourse and identity bring out our third research question:

3. How do the features of CMC, virtual community of online gaming, and the game mechanics of MOBA contribute to the emergence of *LoL* gamer identity, as revealed through textual interaction during gameplay?

Again, under the premise that *LoL* is a virtual community of practice, it is very crucial to tap into the relationship between the use of language and formation of some ethnographically-specific membership roles, not just the collective gamer identity.

This attention to micro participant roles gives rise to our last research question:

4. What are the possible ethnographically specific membership roles in the virtual community of practice *LoL*? How are they interactionally achieved?

Besides all these theoretical motivations, this study is set out to back up previous studies showing that participation in video games is a process of enculturation and requires complex cognitive and cultural skills (e.g. Brown & Bell, 2004; Nardi & Harris, 2006; Steinkuehler, 2006). In this respect, MMOGs should not be overly judged as having a frivolous nature or inviting “inert reception” (Solomon, 2004). Rather, they may have always been providing a space where participants reflect on their interpersonal skills and explore different aspects of their identity, hence implications for cognitive development and pedagogy.

1.3 Outline of the study

The following chapters serve to acquaint readers with relevant theoretical concepts and the study's analytic methods before getting into investigation of the conversational data for clues to *League of Legends* gamer identities. Chapter 2 reviews the historical roots of the concept of identity and how it is later realized as emerging from discourse. Subsequently, virtual identity is covered given the topic at hand. The community of practice theory, as following the discursive view of identity, is also included in there. Chapter 3 introduces my use of the method of discourse-analysis based ethnography to collect data for analysis, which is followed by the introduction of an integrative analytic approach, namely combining the virtues of community of practice, stancetaking, and tactics of intersubjectivity. Chapter 4 in turn presents the analysis of selected discourse from one hundred matches of *League of Legends* gaming, and Chapter 5 discusses our findings with the help of interview responses of some real-life gamers. Chapter 6, last but not least, concludes the study with its significance and implications for future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Since identity is the locus of the present study, this chapter covers first relevant theories and theoretical notions in relation to identity, which is followed by a discussion of identity in the realm of cyberspace. Afterwards, identity is introduced as an issue concerned in the research on MMOGs.

2.1 Theorizing identity

This section attempts a robust but only relevant review on how the concept of identity is researched in the history. From a static entity to a negotiable one, identity has been theorized in different ways. In recent views, it “emerges” from not just the state of mind but real-life practices and discourse. This discursive view of identity is further supported by the sense of membership held in the community of practice theory. At the end of the section, identity is apposed with relevant concepts in order for clarifying the role it plays in the present study.

2.1.1 Identity in the flow of history

The concept of identity, in its previous theorized formations, is hardly associated with actual discourse. From the Age of Enlightenment and the Renaissance to the second half of the twentieth century, according to Benwell and Stokoe (2006), the notion of identity had been referred to as a projection of the self or a subject located in the social. With the former view, identity is a reflection of an individual's state of mind; it is an innate quality endowed with cognition or sensibility (Taylor, 1989; as cited in Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). With the latter, identity is the subject's assigned membership of a particular social group; it exists only in relation to others with the same or different group labels (Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1986; as cited in Benwell & Stokoe, 2006).² Although the above two perspectives on identity enlighten future research in totally different ways, they resemble one another in their emphasis on identity's essentialist nature.³ That is, they both suggest that identity is a single, essential reality inside oneself. In this sense, the conceptualization of identity does not involve reference to real engagement in social practices, including

² This sociological account of identity is the predecessor of social identity theory (Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1986) and variationist sociolinguistics (e.g. Trudgill, 1974).

³ The use of the term "essentialist" here is meant to refer back to the view of essentialism characterizing Plato's and Aristotle's works. In their view, there should be an essence or specific quality behind any concept that makes it what it is (Cartwright, 1968).

negotiation of talk (Hall, 2000; Lave & Wenger, 1991; as cited in Benwell & Stokoe, 2006).

It was not until post modernity (end of twentieth and early twenty-first century) that identity started to shake off its image as a preexisting subjectivity. With an attitude of distrust toward what has been objectively defined as reality and truth, postmodernism is characterized as an uncertain era when identity is realized to be dislocated from the internal, ideologically labeled self. The notion of identity should be “fluid” and “fragmentary” (Giddens, 1991; Laclau, 1990; as cited in Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). This movement against Enlightenment rationality paves the road for discursive views of identity that hold that identity is a patchwork of representations from culturally entrenched semiotic systems and indeterminate play of selves within discourse. Concerning the goal of the current research, we shall focus on the interrelationship between identity and discourse and how it is theorized in the literature.

2.1.2 Discourse and identity

Identity from a discursive point of view has been studied in primarily two discursive

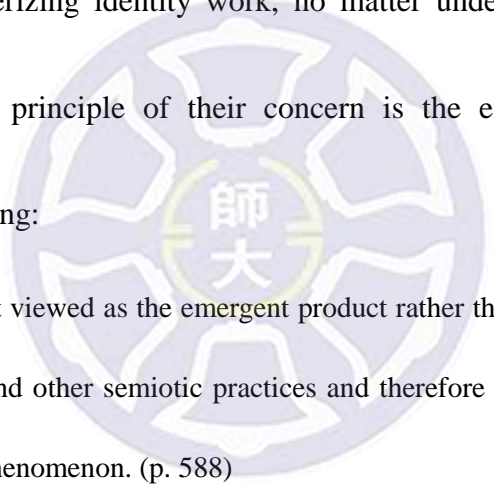
scopes (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). A group of accounts sets sight on broader pictures, where identity is realized in terms of the existing sociocultural and sociohistorical structures, with ideological power placing constraints on constitution of the self (e.g. Althusser, 1971; Foucault, 1972; as cited in Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). The other track of theorization of discourse, however, focuses more on individuals' performances and self-image presentation shaped by here-and-now interactional contexts and demands for interpersonal objectives (e.g. Goffman, 1959; Mead, 1934; as cited in Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). Despite this divergence between structure and agency, they are in essence two sightseeing angles to look at the same view. Postmodernism's ontological nature gives rise to a concept of identity that is anti-essentialist, constituted through discourse, and full of possibilities for social reproduction and creative reformulation of social meaning. From this perspective, structure and agency are complementary to one another in that ideology is transmitted via generations of performative acts and that any (new) elements introduced by identity performances can only make sense when informed by cultural-historical voices. In other words, an ideal realization of identity should be an all-encompassing one, relevant to participation in both the target event on the spot and anterior texture of the social discourse. This attempt to

accommodate concepts of both structure and agency is found in Butler (1997), which suggests the need of a theory of the psyche or conscience in the process of subjection, and Fairclough (2005), where discourse is a focal location for (re)construction of social life in processes of social change. Benwell and Stokoe (2006) and Bucholtz and Hall (2005) jump on this trend, arguing that the notion of identity is interactionally emergent from multiple levels of discourse, from empirical examples of language use to ideological structure. As the present study makes most reference to these works, we shall quickly turn to them in the following passages.

Benwell and Stokoe (2006) conduct a well-rounded review of interaction-based theories of identity. For them, “micro” analytic approaches such as ethnomethodology (EM) and conversation analysis (CA) go hand in hand with “macro” methods of narrative analysis and critical discourse analysis (CDA) in the effort to spell out the full implications of “being oneself.” Particularly drawn into the combination of micro- and macro-levels of discourse are discursive psychology, narrative analysis and critical discourse analysis. They claim that only by such details as linguistic descriptions (i.e. actual speech and texts) can we find the link between macrostructures and the reality, hence the prime attention given to social interaction

and practices. It is, however, a pity that the niche between any two of the introduced methods is simply left there; there is no clear attempt to incorporate them into one comprehensive theory, which is both interaction-based, able to bring local actions to macro socio-political levels, and can therefore serve as a powerful framework for future analyses.

On the other hand, Bucholtz and Hall (2005) are ambitious enough to propose five principles characterizing identity work, no matter under which approach it is investigated. The first principle of their concern is the emergence principle, as explained in the following:



Identity is best viewed as the emergent product rather than the pre-existing source of linguistic and other semiotic practices and therefore as fundamentally a social and cultural phenomenon. (p. 588)

The principle suggests that identity could be a sense of self that inhabits an individual mind; however, identity matters most to the world and the field's scholars only when taken as emerging from one's social practices and dialogic discourse. In other words, identity cannot be simplified as some pre-discursive social categories; it is supposed to be acted out in the course of interaction, where it is associated with the socially meaningful ideology. As for the second principle – the positionality principle, it starts

out from the just mentioned emergent quality of identity:

Identities encompass (a) macro-level demographic categories; (b) local, ethnographically specific cultural positions; and (c) temporary and interactionally specific stances and participant roles. (p. 592)

As the conception of identity is emergent through dialogues such nuanced processes, not only the macro-sociological sense of self (i.e. the widely recognized demographic labels such as age and gender) but also that of the more micro levels are of importance to the understanding of subjectivity and intersubjectivity. This principle is so called because “position” seems to be a more flexible word to describe what is going on in any encounters, even though the positions taken may accumulate to build ideological associations with large-scale constructs of identity. The ontological statuses of identity such as the emergence and positionality qualities are actualized through the third principle – the indexicality principle. The indexicality principle unveils the mechanism whereby linguistic forms are semiotically linked to social meanings (Ochs, 1992), thereby preparing the notion of identity for sociolinguistic analyses. For Bucholtz and Hall, all levels of linguistic structure and use are possible platforms for indexical processes:

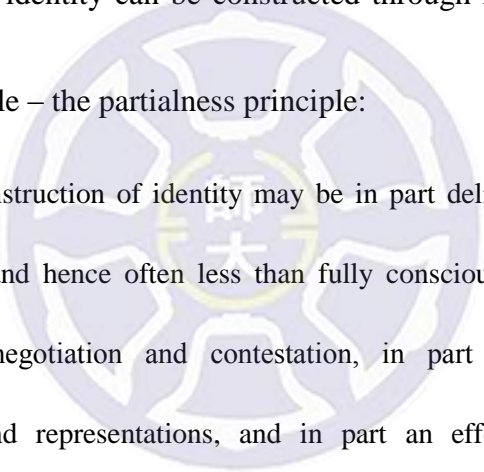
Identity relations emerge in interaction through several related indexical processes, including: (a) overt mention of identity categories and labels; (b) implicatures and presuppositions regarding one's own or others' identity position; (c) displayed evaluative and epistemic orientations to ongoing talk, as well as interactional footings and participant roles; and (d) the use of linguistic structures and systems that are ideologically associated with specific personas and groups. (p. 594)

The naming of identity categories, interlocutors' choices of lexical items, syntactic structures, and even the entire linguistic systems can mean an infinite number of different ways to project oneself in public. Their performances of language could be easily interpreted as display of one's "stances" or more durable structures of mind. The relationality principle, the fourth principle, in turn emphasizes identity as an intersubjective discursive product, suggesting that the goals behind any choices of language rely on the intended social positions relative to one another. Bucholtz and Hall here, along with their previous endeavor (2004), pitch the idea of *tactics of intersubjectivity*, which encompasses a broad range of relational processes:

Identities are intersubjectively constructed through several, often overlapping, complementary relations, including similarity/difference, genuineness/artifice, and authority/delegitimacy. (p. 598)

The three pairs of relations are respectively termed, or say, "verbalized" as adequation / distinction, authentication / denaturalization, and authorization / illegitimation, so as

to highlight the idea that identities emerge out of social actions. Adequation and distinction are processes by which speakers position themselves as alike or distinct in relation to an ideologically enforced identity category; authentication and denaturalization are operated to reconfirm or challenge the naturalized associations between indexical forms and identities; authorization and illegitimation involve the exercise of power given by structures of ideology to impose or suppress particular identities. The fact that identity can be constructed through interactions leads to the last but not least principle – the partialness principle:



Any given construction of identity may be in part deliberate and intentional, in part habitual and hence often less than fully conscious, in part an outcome of interactional negotiation and contestation, in part an outcome of others' perceptions and representations, and in part an effect of larger ideological processes and material structures that may become relevant to interaction. It is therefore constantly shifting both as interaction unfolds and across discourse contexts. (p. 606)

Because who we are is not only a reflection of the individual self (yielding conscious presentation of ourselves or cognitively habitual practices) but an outcome of interactional negotiation of meaning among the situated contextual elements (interactants and ideological structures, etc.), any representation of identity is partial.

In line of this, a multiple dimensional view of identity will have the edge of being able to uncover a fuller picture of the reality.

We learn from the above review that most approaches of the field before the twenty-first century cannot handle the complexities of social meaning implied by the interrelation between identity and discourse; they tend to take care of only one or a few more aspects of the entirety. Bucholtz and Hall (2005) recognize the lack of coalition among such approaches and explicitly theorize the notion of identity by exemplifying interactional detail and furthermore relating it to wider macrostructures. In the following section, we introduce the concept of community of practice, which circumscribes a space where such relation between agency and structure is built up in a locally meaningful way.

2.1.3 Community of practice

The concept of community of practice has its root in constructivism (e.g. Piaget, 1950) as an anti-force to traditional pedagogy where instructors instill knowledge to learners via codification and transference. In line with this view, cognition develops at the time and place in which certain experience occurs with the individual. Learning from

the perspective of constructivism emphasizes the presence of both hands-on tasks that bring up real-world problems and the co-participants, usually teammates. That is, group activities are of great value in this teaching method because participants are needed to engage in negotiated processes with the aim to attain their shared goals. Learning in groups is later attributed to *communities of practice* (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), a notional space in which learning takes place as one communicates with other members during participation in particular practices. Such participatory learning is termed as *situated learning* (Wenger, 1998) because it is situated in authentic contexts from real situations. With regard to this approach to pedagogy, Bielaczyc and Collins (1999) further stresses that a culture of learning in a community of practice is built upon participants' shared knowledge of learning how to learn, or say, their social interdependence.

The community of practice is actually a theory of identity. According to Wenger (2010), the concepts of community of practice and identity coexist as a whole since they complement each other's social meaning. A community of practice without a place for identity loses sight of the social dynamics of membership while identity out of its belonging community of practice (or context) brings us back to the essentialist

era assuming over-determinant integrity of oneself. Learning in meaningful context, a person actively constitutes him/herself as not only a cognitive entity but also a social participant who is a negotiated product of social interaction. To be more specific, the way of being in a community of practice is a knower equipped with the competence of the community. In this respect, a newcomer of the community may possess little competence of value; but it does not mean that the person cannot contribute to the group at all. When entering the community, he/she brings along personal experience of knowledgeability that could be new and conducive to some change to the existing belief system. No matter whether the new element is rejected or accepted, further negotiation or “realignment” (p. 181) of meaning occurs among the community members. It is through this avenue that the participants identify and dis-identify with the community, others, and themselves. In other words, identity in the framework of community of practice is interactionally defined; it should be realized in a dynamic process where an individual finds his/her way to the periphery or holds his/her position at the core of a social group.

In relation to the resources community members use to achieve mutual understanding, Wenger (1998) suggests that “shared repertoire” (p. 82) like words,

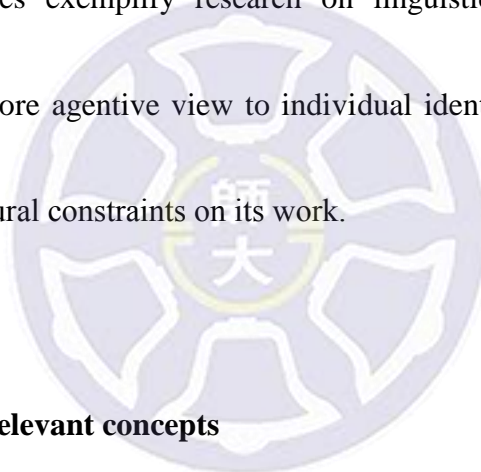
artifacts, and routines reflects not just a well-established history of mutual engagement but also possibilities for future reengagement in new situations. Such heritage is “ambiguous” (p. 83) not because of its uncertainty of locating meaning but because it entails an element of unexpectedness from negotiability. The repertoire constructs a discourse against which members create meaningful statements and form styles of expressing their standing in the community. As a result, the community of practice framework revolutionizes the treatment for linguistic heterogeneity. It supplements the long stood *speech community* model (e.g. Labov, 1966; Trudgill, 1974) with a link between arbitrary variation patterns and the complex meaning speakers negotiate during concrete interactions, in local communities. Language itself reflects little reality if it loses contact with the social and physical context of its use.

Taking on the idea of community of practice in the field of sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology, Eckert (1989, 2000) examines the linguistic styles adopted by the opposing identity categories that constitute the social order of Detroit suburban Belton High School: the jocks and the burnouts. The jocks and burnouts embody middle class and working class cultures or institutional and locally oriented cultures respectively, with conflicting ideologies and sociolinguistic competences. Through a

look at vocalic variables associated with urban and suburban communities, the study shows that speakers are linguistic agents in constructing style and identity. In other words, the relation between style and identity is “reactive” (p. 214) to the regime of a particular community. Only by treating the jocks and the burnouts as communities of practice, their cultures as constituted by different social practices, can the actual dynamics of social meaning be revealed and give implications to social change.

At another time and space, Bucholtz (1999) also attempts to approach the role language plays in socialization using the community of practice framework. She observes a third group of high-school students, the nerds. To the community of nerds, the optimal symbolic capital is not the charisma of coolness as claimed by the jocks and burnouts. Rather, the value is placed on intelligence as well as practices that help to achieve it, including school attendance, books, and academia. Bucholtz presents the findings with two kinds of linguistic indices to the nerd identity: *negative identity practices* and *positive identity practices*. While negative identity practices are employed by individuals to increase the social distance between themselves and unsanctioned identity, positive ones are employed to claim the chosen identity. Both of them could be stratified into several linguistic levels such as phonological,

syntactic, lexical, and discursive practices. The analytic categories of *linguistic identity practices* reveal “the heterogeneity of membership” (p. 220) in the community of practice. That is, within the cohort of nerds, successful or unsuccessful intellectual display makes emerge a heterogeneous group of both central and marginal members. Bringing peripheral members to the foreground, Bucholtz’s work is notable for its attention to the individual, not the group, as the unit of analysis. Both of the above-mentioned studies exemplify research on linguistic variation as a social practice; they take a more agentic view to individual identity while also admitting the community’s structural constraints on its work.



2.1.4 Identity and its relevant concepts

When identity is anchored in interaction, its articulation (i.e. a conversational act or interactional practice) could be seen as representing an attitude or intention towards the world, which may furthermore contribute to the formation of one’s durable persona. Literature of (socio)linguistics over the year has captured such indexicalization⁴ through theoretical concepts such as footing, positioning and

⁴ The use of the term “indexicalization” here suggests the process during which a particular sign points to some social state of being. It could be taken as a synonym of the more theorized concept of *indexicality* (e.g. Ochs, 1992).

stancetaking; with the aim to clarify what counts as “identity” in my research, there is a need to carefully go through these conceptually proximal constructs for the sake of further study.

The conception of *footing*, for starters, is one of the earliest attempts to theorize linguistic indexicals in sociological terms, later applied in linguistic analysis of discourse. Goffman (1974, 1981) considers an utterance to be establishing *frames* of reference, according to which guidance and structures of expectation (including the relations among speakers, hearers, and utterances) people negotiate their footing within a set of participant roles in an act of speaking. In line with his view, a participant’s footing during a talk can be thought of as a particular social capacity that gives his/her words authority and changes in accordance with the frame for events. Due to its ephemeral feature, Goffman’s understanding of framing and footing has given proof that every moment of discourse is a potential turning point for interpersonal relationships or alignments.

Positioning or *subject position* (Davies & Harré, 1990; Harré & van Langenhove, 1999; Hollway 1984; Smith, 1988), compared to footing, is a form of personhood that more underlines the dynamics, contradictions, and discontinuities of psychology. It

metaphorically “locates” changes in participant structures on the basis of a person’s moral/personal attributes, subjective history, and the investment of power relations in jointly produced story lines. Taken as an “immanentist view” (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999, p. 33) to understand mental phenomena, positioning is not narrowly confined in meaning to the shifting of transcendentalist *roles* but generated through moment-by-moment discursive practices.⁵ In this respect, positioning is an agentic, self-conscious way of constructing (inter)subjectivity.

Still another conceptual entity that resonates with the indexing of social identity is *stance* (e.g. Du Bois, 2007; Englebretson, 2007; Jaffe, 2009; Ochs, 1996), which lately broadens its impact across not just corpus linguistics (as *authorial stance*) and critical discourse analyses (as embedded stances in political texts, for example) but fields of social sciences including sociocultural linguistics and linguistic anthropology. Stance, in a general sense, is a communication act through which we social actors display orientations to the sociolinguistic meanings associated with the form or the context of particular utterances. With reference to Ochs (1996), one of the earliest discussions on the sociocultural dimensions of stance, *epistemic* and *affective stances*

⁵ While transcendentalists believe that an absolute, general idea could transcend what is subsumed, immanentists take the stance that the reality is a sense of becoming – that ideas should exist within our lives (Deleuze, 2001). These two ontological views are close in implication to essentialism and non-essentialism.

as indexed by linguistic structures have been said to be the basic components of social acts and social identities. This idea paves the road to the distinction between direct and indirect indexicality where stance mediates between language practices and relatively enduring social personas. Sociolinguistic realization of stance is also known for its dialogic dimension, entailing that stances are achieved interactionally and taken metacognitively to bring about some interpersonal consequences. Its consequential nature is vividly shown in the actual process of alignment along the history of discourse. In other words, uptake of acts of stance at present receives meaning from the contrastive stances in prior text; in the meanwhile, they prospectively constrain subsequent utterances from other interlocutors and have implications for social reproduction and change. To stress that stances are something we actively engage in, its gerund form with the active verb *take*, *stancetaking*, grows to be a new key word in relevant studies.

Concepts such as footings, positions, and stances could be taken as alternative names for identity when it gets its indexical meaning from the moment of the speech event and the workings of broader cultural ideologies. Looking at these family terms as interchangeable to one another within the sociocultural field is not to deny their

respective theoretical characteristics, but rather to highlight the most important indexical plus interactional nature shared among the concepts alike, whatever they are called. In line with this conclusion, I shall hold a view of identity that is close to the one maintained by Bucholtz and Hall (2004, 2005) – that identity is more than just a macro-level ideological category. Its meaning should be broader enough to incorporate the relevant concepts reviewed in here. For the sake of this, the mission of my study is to describe the findings with detailed interpretation of language into presentation of both the speakers’ interactionally specific roles (footings, positions, and stances) and stereotypically constructed selves (demographic or ethnographic identity as indexed or cumulated by stance taking moves).

2.2 Identity in cyberspace

As communication technologies become increasingly domesticated, the boundaries between real and virtual have been questionable as to their relative contributions to the understanding of our identities. The question of “who I am” in an online community has, therefore, been crucial to the studies of sociolinguistics. This section aims to tap into important questions about identity construction in computerized

virtual world. The first part recalls the conception of online identity in its generic sense, as reflected in its comparison with real world social beings. The second passage concerns identity in digital game world in particular, given the topic of the present research.

2.2.1 Online identity

To explore what makes online, virtual selves so idiosyncratic and thus worthy of discussion in a whole new section, one may want to put some thinking into the differences between real and virtual realities, or real-life and cyber space. The notion of *cyberspace*, first dubbed by Gibson (1984), is commonly realized as a figurative environment where “a graphic representation of data abstracted from the bank of every computer in the human system” (p. 51) comes to connect with each other. It has become a conventional means to describe anything in conjunction with the Internet, but with an extra implication of fluidity and humanity that are not normally attributed to the computerized network (Wood & Smith, 2005). Below I organize two key draws of the concept that are most related with the workings of identity: its code-driven constraints and hospitable environment for sociality.

Consider first the code-driven constraints brought about by infrastructure of the computer system, or say, how configurations of computerized programs exercise control over the behaviors of Internet users. An evident design for many virtual environments online is their text-based communicative platforms (Wood & Smith, 2005),⁶ which leads us to the subject of the language of the Internet or computer mediated communication (CMC). To Crystal (2006) and Herring (1996), the language of CMC is almost indecipherable to outsiders and characterized by linguistic creativity such as emoticons, acronyms, unconventional spellings, representations of both written and spoken features, and any other codes produced to meet with the constraints of the context. In such a form of online communication, sound, images, and other nonverbal stimuli sent from the conversants cannot be shared through computers. The remaining communication cues, especially when transmitted intermittently or asynchronously, could enhance message senders' self-awareness in planning conversation or self-presentation. Receivers, on the other hand, may judge a person based on their stereotypes reflected in meager information. This observation,

⁶ The discussion on CMC here is purposefully limited to text-based exchanges because the conversation data in the present study only consist of written messages, with no sounds or images of the interactants.

noted as the *hyperpersonal interaction* of CMC (Walther, 1996),⁷ also has a bearing on the second constraining effect imposed by the computer system – anonymity. In mediated contexts such as the Internet, communicators are provided with access to a state of anonymity where their real-life identities remain unknown, or more commonly, pseudonymity where they disguise themselves with unidentifiable pseudonyms. It is because of such a possibility that the hyperpersonal nature of CMC is tenable. As participants do not have to risk personal security, they experience more freedom to verbalize their thoughts in public, which, when going too far, leads to uninhibited or assertive texts such as hostile speech acts. Reduced self-regulation and lack of accountability may as well become a problem. In addition to the malleability of self-representations, anonymity and pseudonymity also create opportunities for redeployments of social relationships in the virtual world. That is, without a pre-given understanding of partners' hierarchical status and social power, users are able to participate more equally in communication, starting new as members of a democratized society (Kiesler, Siegel, & McGuire, 1984). A communicator's credibility in transmitting particular information can therefore be built solely on the

⁷ The hyperpersonal nature of CMC is derived from the *social identity deindividuation* (SIDE) theory, (Lea & Spears, 1992) which suggests that, without prior knowledge about their partners, CMC members tend to heighten their feelings or attitudes toward each other when the given-off social context cues are associated with membership in certain social categories.

practices that they engage in in cyberspace, not their achievements or bad reputation in real lives. Another computerized design of relevance is the availability of more than one account or username one could apply for online. In terms of sociology, it means the actionable multiplicity of identity with CMC. This feature goes hand in hand with anonymity and pseudonymity in providing a safety net for a wrongdoer on the Internet, as he/she could just reconstruct a new, innocent self to get rid of the “package” of the former identity. More importantly, the design allows participants to play with different aspects or “faces” of themselves. In line with this, the Internet is considered a “social laboratory” (Turkle, 1995) or “identity workshop” (Bruckman, 1992) for experiments with one’s psychodramas and unexplored personas. For example, a “flamer” is someone who predominantly projects his/her vicious side in cyberspaces. In sum, online users would adapt their verbal behaviors to cater for the restrictions set by the mediated context in their formation of impressions and identities.

As for the cyberspace’s hospitable environment for sociality, we direct attention to the emergence of online community, under the social influence of those irresistible external forces exerted by the computer system mentioned above. Strictly speaking,

this phenomenon is also a product of a code-driven constraint, that is, the messaging channels for one-to-many communication. Due to the development of the “network,” online identities could naturally emerge from joint groups where peer-to-peer communication and collaboration are valued (Crawford, 2004). From a social information processing perspective (Walther, 1992), it has been shown that Internet users are apt to build interpersonal relationships with one another, even with previously unfamiliar partners. This is why there are norms of conduct, group-specific meanings for language or other practices, and socially negotiated interpersonal relationships among the participants (Baym, 1998). To better understand their interpersonal interactions, one may refer to the idea of *virtual community*, as introduced by Rheingold (1993):

Virtual communities are social aggregations that emerge from the Net when enough people carry on those public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feeling, to form webs of personal relationship in cyberspace. (p. 5)

In other words, different from traditional communities, virtual communities are not based on proximity of participants to one another or face-to-face interaction but ongoing communication and a sense of belonging (“feeling”) to the social peer groups. To continue with this notion, Squire and Johnson (2000) add that virtual communities

in cyberspace should be organized around a task or activity, existing according to a need or mutual interest. To be more specific, Palloff and Pratt (1999) generalize several prerequisites for the emergence of virtual communities. In addition to a common public space for the group, members need to identify the motive or purpose for CMC's use and subsequently define a code of conduct, assign a range of participant roles, and facilitate subgroups. In relevance to this, one may also make reference to the establishment of netiquette (i.e. Internet etiquette), meaning rules or responsibilities that the participants expect their members to observe. These social norms serve as a reference point for evaluation of who is a newbie, an outsider, or an old-time netizen.

As summarized in this section, in media where text is present, the use of language is of great importance because it allows the Internet user to project his/her voice there, thereby constructing their unique online identities. All of the code-driven constraints discussed help to build images of multiplicity and fluidity of the new era's identity, which echoes with the postmodern, discursive view of selves reviewed in the previous section. With the additional sense of groupness and aptitude for sociality online, virtual identity is now understood in the context of online communities and

through channels of mutual subjectivity among members.

2.2.2 Massively multiplayer online gamer identity

As a site of online collaboration or social network, massively multiplayer online games (MMOGs) have been giving clues to the authoring of identities as situated in the virtual communities. As a matter of fact, MMOGs are not the earliest technology-mediated environments where people pursue their desire for fantasy. Back to 1980s, a class of virtual worlds known as Multi-User Dungeons (MUDs)⁸ fulfilled one's dream of playing out adventures as he/she acted in a character engaging in fictional practices in the computational space. The character interactions in the virtual reality are primarily text-based; players may invoke commands to direct certain texts to appear on the screen of each other. To investigate the relationship between role-playing and identity work through MUDs, most previous researchers (e.g. Turkle, 1994, 1995) have focused on meaning making from sociological or psychological perspectives. The collected data based on participant observations and interviews have shown that MUDs have evocative power in that players enter the world to think

⁸ The label of this category of virtual worlds derives from a role-playing game called "Dungeons and Dragons" booming in 1970s.

or work through personal concerns and different aspects of themselves. In other words, “online identities” in studies on virtual social space of MUDs have been related to the true identity of the players, which could even serve as a piece of evidence of the blurred boundaries between real life and virtual space.

Along the development of technology, alternative digital worlds have been created, where players no longer have to rely on descriptions to perform actions. From graphical 2-D chat environments to the advent of 3-D space like *EverQuest*, *World of Warcraft*, *Lineage* in the recent decade, online game worlds have held their stance as a sizable part of the interactive entertainment industry, gradually becoming what we commonly refer to as MMOGs today. In the fields of sociology and anthropology (or sociolinguistics and anthropologic linguistics), aside from quantitative surveys that have been conducted to explore play patterns (e.g. Seay, Jerome, Lee, & Kraut, 2004), motivations for play MMOGs (e.g. Yee, 2002), and perceptions of in-game social roles (e.g. Friedline & Collister, 2012), most research works devote themselves to participant-observation ethnography, where conversation analyses and interviews are done to gather traces of participants’ collaborative play, player communities, and the work of gamer identity.

In previous literature, MMOGs are constantly emphasized as a social construction or mechanism for socialization (e.g. Ducheneaut & Moore, 2005; Seay et al., 2004; Steinkuehler, 2004; Steinkuehler, 2008). Although bunches of conventions about how to behave in the virtual society, such as *twinking* (Jakobsson & Taylor, 2003), are not intended by the online intermediaries, overall speaking MMOGs are designed in a way that makes player collaboration essential for achieving high-end goals and success within the game. For example, there are tasks or quests that are difficult to accomplish if players do not team up to complement each other in terms of their characters' "inborn" strengths and weaknesses and engage in strategic interaction through a chat channel. In fact, most MMOGs have expansive grouping and guild systems by which players are able to create "actual" social organizations within the virtual world. Great efforts have been made in the field to describe the emergent culture, or more specifically, the types of social interaction on the ground of the game's framework. According to Ducheneaut and Moore (2005), three types of social skills are found to be vital for proving one's competence as a player, including self-organization into small groups, instrumental coordination with other roles (or classes), and sociability with chatting. Nardi and Harris (2006), on the other hand,

introduce the multiplicity of collaborative play with regard to informal encounters with strangers, more structured collaborations with friends and strangers, downtime acts of fun, and misbehaving through spamming. Such findings normally sum up with the notion of community where players share a collective activity of having fun and learn to recognize community-valued goals through playing with others. In line with this, the theory of situated learning plus community of practice (see Section 2.1.3) is one way of tapping into MMOG players' joint participation in light of enculturation and apprenticeship. Particularly interesting is when one considers the "newbie versus veteran" distinction implicit in a gaming community of practice. That is, through social learning and participation, novice players or newbies move from periphery to the center of the virtual community (Steinkuehler, 2006). Their learning resources may include in-game discussion with fellow players, out-game discussions on forums and websites, observation, and in-situ teaching from more experienced players, or veterans (Ducheneaut & Moore, 2005). As pointed out by Steinkuehler (2004), participation in valued community practices is in this way consequential for a player's membership and identity in the game.

Taking MMOGs as communities, researchers have also emphasized the role

discursive interaction plays in maintaining social relationships among the members. As pointed out by Ducheneaut and Moore (2005), players spend even more time simply talking with others than engaging in combat. Regarding the content of talk, Seay et al. (2004) reports that MMOG players communicate to exchange support and advice, exercise sociability, and coordinate tasks and activities. As for the forms of their language, it is discovered that they take on linguistic practices such as specialized word choice and syntax, abbreviations and truncations, and typographical and grammatical errors (Steinkuehler, 2006; Turkle, 1995). With the view that language is a social practice particular to the players of an MMOG, prior literature has resorted to *thick descriptions* (Geertz, 1973) of in-game communication to unveil the utterances' social consequences in social networking. It is implied from such examination that language is being used to construe reality of not only the game world but also the player community, with its peculiar cultural and cognitive structures. In this sense, the utterances in question could be seen to index the interactants' membership within the community. In other words, the interactants have agency in deploying linguistic or discursive resources to present themselves on the screen, as the kinds of people appreciated by the community or not. Another research

type focusing on virtual discourse involves the use of Conversation Analysis, with discourse feature such as turn continuation, cohesion, and reference (e.g. Collister, 2006). The result is associated with players' endeavor to demonstrate orientations to each other and to the game world. Just like the community-based studies mentioned earlier, such an analysis of conversation in MMOGs does not take identity as the starting point or major issue to deal with in research. Particular linguistic or discursive practices are not presented as having specific connections to participants' construction of identities. In other words, it is still unclear how MMOG players comprehend and act on who they are in the frame of identity theories.

Up till now, identity as an issue has been covered mostly as one's membership in the community. There are indeed scholars who give full attention to players' individual identities in relation to each other, instead of the collective identity as a community member. The most cited characterization of players should be, again, the distinction between newbie and veteran, or peripheral and central participant (in terms of the concept of community of practice), as it directly concerns the ability to participate with other members and is the most important dimension in judging one's standing in the virtual community. Steinkuehler (2008) raises one such discussion on

the difference between newbies and veterans in *Lineage II*. Besides the continuum that runs from newcomers and old timers, there have been great variations in dimensions of player categorizations. Bartle (1996), for example, organizes primarily four types of players based on the question “What do people want out of a MUD?” The four stereotypical players include achievers (who play to achieve game-related goals), explorers (who play to explore interesting features or design of the game), socializers (who play to socialize with others), and killers (who play to kill off others’ fun by causing their distress). Despite the classification, the study ends with a reminder that it is the combination of the four that makes MUDs unique. Following this work, Yee (2002) proposes five motivation factors for why people play MMOGs: relationship (to develop relationships with others), immersion (to enjoy being immersed in the fantasy world), grief (to enjoy the game by annoying others), achievement (to become powerful and reach goals set by the game), and leadership (to enjoy leadership positions within the game). Since each gamer has a score for each factor, the research is not intended for mutually exclusive types of players but for a clearer understanding of different facets or aspects of a person during gameplay. Still concerning micro characterization of MMOG players, Friedline and Collister (2012)

examine the relationship between a player's social power and his/her levels of experience, and, furthermore, the relationship between a power role and the use of language. Two categories of language are identified, respectively collaborative language and aggressive language. While the former (e.g. compliment, indirect order) is associated with inexperienced players and powerful participants who tend to promote harmonious social interaction, the latter (e.g. threatening speech act, direct language) is associated with domineering power roles and spammers.

As shown, MMOG player identity is still a nascent topic in the field of sociolinguistics and anthropologic linguistics. Language has not been clearly shown to mediate between gamer identity and the virtual community, which leaves a niche to be filled by the present study.

2.3 Summary

Socialization is built upon human interactions that are both “context-shaped” and “context-renewing” (Goodwin, 2006, p. 443). That is, turns of talk rely on local contexts and macrostructures for their indexical meaning and at the same time creatively construct or transform interpersonal relationships among the here-and-now

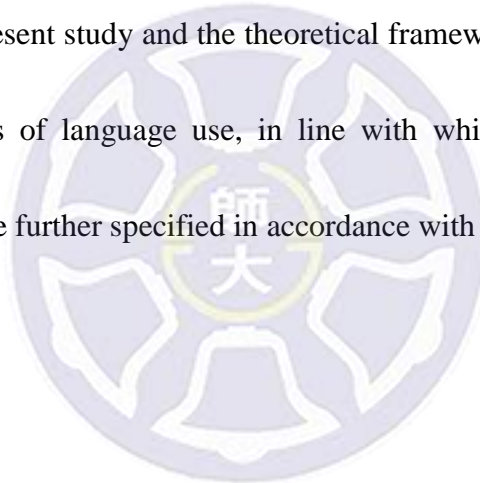
participants. The review of relevant studies in this chapter reveals the necessity for fellow researchers to strike a balance between macro-level structure and micro-level agency. We must come to realize that linguistic behaviors are based upon the existing sociocultural valences while having the potential to transcend the historically achieved conventions through their moment-by-moment exchange. The stance summarized here corresponds to the third wave of variation studies proposed by Eckert (2012), where ideology is situated in talk itself, in the construction of meaning.

As the sense of presence of the MMOG virtual community dovetails with the idea of community of practice, it makes perfect sense to conduct a research like the present. In other words, this study follows the view that identity emerges from discourse within the frame of a community and could receive practical social meaning from local encounters and experience.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter encompasses the two main concerns of methodology: data collection and data analysis. In the former section, I give an account of why I choose *League of Legends* to be the cyberspace from which I collect data relevant to the issue of identity, which is followed by a description of the process of my data collection. In the section of data analysis, I introduce the relation between the present study and the theoretical frameworks I apply to it. Moreover, the socio-cultural practices of language use, in line with which my analysis in the next chapter is organized, will be further specified in accordance with linguistic theories.



3.1 Data collection

3.1.1 Why *League of Legends*?

League of Legends (*LoL*) is an MMOG developed by Riot Games; it was launched in November 2011 and soon accumulated 32.5 million players around the world. The reason why I choose it as my data source is simply that it is the most well received MMOG in Taiwan, at the time of research. In January 2012, Riot Games and *LoL*'s Taiwanese operator Garena lit up Taipei 101 to celebrate 1,010,000 users, almost 5 percent of the population, in *LoL* Taiwan edition. In early October 2012, Taiwan's professional *LoL* team Taipei Assassins

won the Season 2 World Championship, with the number of players keeping summitting new peaks afterward. Even till 2016, *LoL* has always been the most discussed PC game on the Taiwanese gamer forum – Bahamut. Besides its immense popularity, *LoL* belongs to an MMOG genre very distinct from many of the MMOGs studied in the literature. Therefore, my choice of the game may bring about interesting questions as to the social landscape of MMOG virtual worlds.

LoL is placed in the genre of multiplayer online battle arena (MOBA), or action real-time strategy (ARTS), following the successful *Defense of the Ancients (DotA)* of the category. Players of MOBA control virtual characters of choice in opposing two teams whose collective goal is to tear down the rival's home base. Although there are computer-controlled minions that help protect the player's side of main structure, it is basically the players' avatars who contribute the most to the defense of the base. Along the paths minions march are the three "lanes" being the vanguard of warfare and places for deployment of forces. During gameplay, players of the genre have to kill neutral or enemy units for experience points and gold. While experience points allow the characters to level up and obtain powerful abilities, gold enables them to buy items of all sorts at a weapon and armor store. Items are the most direct way to augment the characters' battle viability.

Particular to *LoL*, there are normally four game modes with different terminal objectives and ways of gameplay. Among the four, I take "Summoner's Rift" as the only context of the

study because it resembles the most the classic gameplay of MOBA and its popularity triumphs over the rest three. The mode of Summoner's Rift has all the features described in the last passage. Players are the so-called "summoners" who summon up "champions" to participate in a match. Each champion has a set of unique abilities including one passive and four active abilities. These abilities are not available at the beginning of a match (except for the passive ability) but unlocked and leveled up during the course of gameplay, as champions gain experience points and level themselves up by achieving certain intermediate objectives. The maximum level for every champion is 18, at which point all of the ability levels could be maxed out. All of the rewards (experience, gold, and buffs) and achievements (items bought and accomplished missions) will not be carried over to a new match, which means that every match starts with equal standing among players of the two teams.

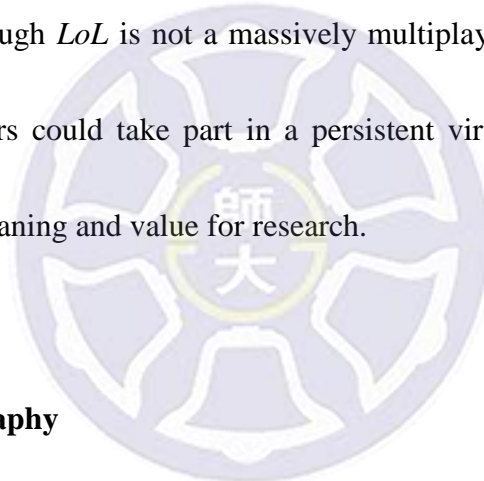
Still one thing to clarify is that there are mainly three matchmaking options or game types for the mode of Summoner's Rift, respectively Normal Game, Ranked Game, and Team Builder. Normal Game gathers two teams of players selected by an automated matchmaking system. To play Normal Game, one could team up with 1-4 others before matched up with random players as the rest of the teammates and opponents in a 5v5 match. In spite of that, most players choose to play solo with total strangers against five others. Ranked Game, on the other hand, is only available to summoners reaching level 30. Although it shares with Normal Game the way of matchmaking, players are ranked against each other

according to the results of their matches. As for the option of Team Builder, the matchmaking is based on premade teams of five players who are real-time acquaintances or online friends from previous matches. Such teams are seen as inseparable units to be paired up with other clans. The present study will disregard Ranked Game and Team Builder and focus only on Normal Game for data collection. The reason behind this is, again, so simple that it is the most played type of PvP match and could represent most gaming experience of the public.

Before we move on to the next section, there are still features of the game that need to be elaborated because they have a lot to do with the built-in social setting for player interaction. First of all, we shall peek into more trivial characteristics of the player-controlled champions. With reference to their different abilities and innate “stats”,⁹ *LoL* champions could be grouped into mainly six types or classes, as defined by the game client: Tank (with strong defenses but little damage output), Fighter (with a balanced aptitude for dealing and surviving damage but limited attack range), Slayer (with quick burst damage but little resilience), Mage (with great ability power and area of effect damage but little resilience), Controller (with ally-protecting buff and control abilities but little damage output), or Marksman (with great long-range attack damage but little resilience). As each class has its own strengths and weaknesses, the game is favorable to a team with versatile classes of players who compliment each other’s abilities. This asymmetry among the champions

⁹ “Stats” is the clipped form of “base statistics;” it refers to the default values a champion is given with regard to its health (regeneration), mana (regeneration), armor, magic resist, attack damage, attack speed, auto-attack range, etc. These statistics increase with levels but at different rates on different champions.

potentially facilitates players' strategic negotiation over their roles in the battlefield. Another feature of concern is the textual chat and smart ping system in the game. During gameplay, there is a chat window in the lower-left corner of the screen where players could post messages to communicate with each other. In addition to the sent messages and system announcements of what happens in the Summoner's Rift, the chat box is also filled with alerts given off by allies to signal Danger, Enemy Missing, Assist Me, and On My Way. Such chat commands undoubtedly constitute a platform for social interaction, and for linguistic research. In sum, even though *LoL* is not a massively multiplayer online role-playing game (MMORPG), where players could take part in a persistent virtual society, communication there never lacks social meaning and value for research.



3.1.2 Virtual ethnography

The method of research adopted in the present study is discourse-analysis based ethnography. As interaction in such virtual worlds as MMOGs is relatively cue-deprived compared to face-to-face communication (See Section 2.2.1), textual messages delivered in the chat box take on particularly great value in exploring how the informers construe reality. This is even true when ideologies and identities are embedded in social practices (including language) of a community. Linguistics is necessary for the enlightenment of the community's socio-cultural models. My discourse-analysis based ethnography could be understood in terms of the two

components: ethnography and discourse analysis. This section will deal with my ethnographic fieldwork and collections of communications for analysis. Interviews are also conducted but do not serve as the main source for data collection; they are only intended for supporting discourse analysis. The method of discourse analysis will be covered in the next section.

Regarding ethnographic field research, I follow the idea of *virtual ethnography* (Hine, 2000; Mason, 1999), which suggests that the ethnographer should focus on the virtual persona presented in the cyberspace, instead of the person who controls it at the keyboard. In other words, although it is doubtless that the online identity reflects an aspect of oneself, our mission here is not to know the player in real life but to take the projected aspect of self as a “whole person” who is a citizen of the virtual world. In line with this, cyberspace is the ethnographic reality where I immerse myself as one of the participants to observe and learn what certain experience or practices mean to them. As an online game enthusiast myself, I have had twelve years of online gaming and four years of *LoL* gaming experience. During these years not only did I participate in the practice of gaming but I also observed out-game discussions in forums and websites, discussed gameplay with my gamer friends, and watched professional gaming or eSports competitions online from time to time. I was an innocent player among the first three years of *LoL* gaming but became a player slash ethnographer in the fourth year, from Spring 2015 to Spring 2016, when I kept field notes, asked questions,

and “consciously” gathered information about the history and social practices of *LoL* gamers. That was also the time during which I collected data for my discourse analysis. Since players of a MOBA game like *LoL* ought to re-choose their champions for the next match, I do not have a “perpetual character” on all the game maps. However, no matter what champion I select, I will be known to others by a fixed pseudonym, the name of myself taking on the role as a summoner. I was a level 30 summoner named 凱洛泰特斯; though I am qualified to play Ranked Game, I spent most of the time in Normal Game matches. While *LoL* gaming, I did not deliberately provoke other players’ responses for research purposes; rather, I pretty much stayed true to myself as a gamer, rarely posting messages on the chat channel except when replying to others’ demands or providing important intelligence for the team’s operational planning. Such gaming experiences allow me to see how the participants consider their collective practices, respective practices among different others, and most importantly consequences brought by these practices to the group.

For discourse analysis, I obtained conversation data from one hundred matches of Normal Game I played from August 2 to November 8, 2015. Within these one hundred matches, there are around five matches in which I played with my friends. In order to collect the conversation data, I used the game’s built-in screen capture feature, that is, pressing F12 to freeze and take a shot of the moment’s full screen including the chat window. The screenshots were located in c:\riot games\League of Legends\screenshots and thus easy to

retrieve. Figure 1 is an exemplary screenshot; its chat box is zooming up in Figure 2 for more clarity:

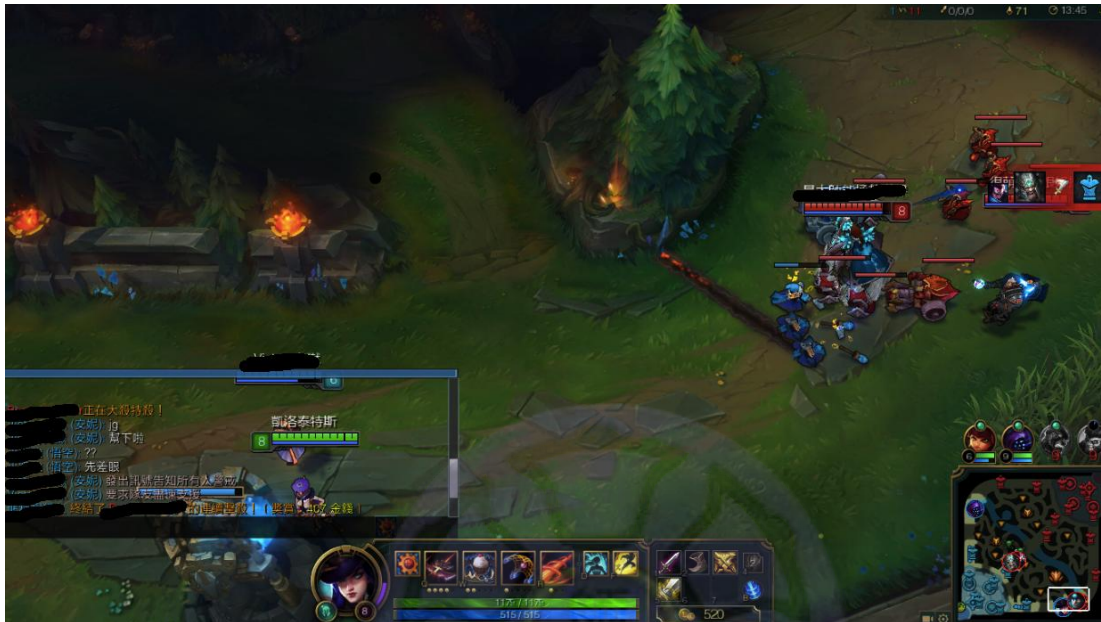


Figure 1. A screenshot of *League of Legends* gameplay.



Figure 2. A zooming-up chat window during *League of Legends* gameplay.

In Figure 2, words in white color are messages sent by the players; they are the focus of my analysis. Names of the speakers are at the beginning of the lines, followed by parentheses containing the names of the champions they choose to play. All player names shown above are crossed out because of ethical issues; in this generation, even pseudonyms have legal protections. In my semi-raw, semi-processed transcripts for analysis in the next chapter, champion names are substituted for player pseudonyms. In the chat box, as shown in Figure 2 again, blue names belong to allies while red ones (crossed out in the first and the bottom line) are the members of the opposing team. In the 100 matches of conversation data, player messages are all given off by the team of my side (names in blue) while red names only appear when the system announces the enemy side of achievements. The system announcements are written in orange while players' use of smart pings is decoded in beige. On such a platform, players can post whatever messages (except that swear words are banned and replaced by asterisks) whenever they want during the gameplay. The only things they have to do are to type out the words and strike the Enter key to send them out. This interface of online game chat has affected some of the expected discourse structures from face-to-face communication. First of all, because the CMC here is "quasi-synchronous" (Garcia & Jacobs, 1999), longer gaps or silences are more acceptable among the interlocutors' turns. Plus, because players may need to pay more visual attention to what is happening in the game world, dropping out of the conversation is not surprising. Second, it is never possible that

more than one speaker talk at a time, since lines of chat must be displayed in the order of when each message is sent (Herring, 1999). Because of this, interruption from and overlapping with others' utterances will never occur within a single line. Only when a player constructs a turn with multiple messages can it be interrupted. This is usually when another interlocutor's line inserts between the interrupted speaker's lines of turn.

Also part of data collection is the interviews I conducted to further prove the presence of the sense of belonging to a community and ideologies about certain identity categories. I recruited ten *LoL* players to be my interviewees; all of them are my real-life friends, relatives, and students who have played *LoL* for at least three years. Note here that some of the interviewees are the ones who played with me in the one hundred matches where I recorded the chat. To elicit useful data from the respondents, I structure the interview with specific questions as followed:

1. Are *LoL* players as a whole like a miniature social organization or community, in consideration of their norms of conduct and need for apprenticeship?
2. Through what channels do you apprentice yourself for excellence in *LoL* gaming?
3. What do you think is the purpose of using the chat channel in *LoL*? Why?
4. Is there anything special about the sentence structures or vocabulary words employed by *LoL* players? If yes, what is it or what are they? Does the feature(s) make you feel like belonging to the game world?

5. What do you think of *LoL* players who dominate the game chat?
6. Do you usually find *LoL* players aggressive in their text messages? What kind of in-game consequences or socio-cultural effects do such messages lead to? Or why do you think these players act this way?
7. Have you ever played MMORPGs? What do you think is the difference between player textual interactions in MMORPGs and *LoL*?
8. What types of players are there in *LoL*, with regard to their gaming styles? How do these different types of players behave in the game chat respectively? Does the same categorization fit into the virtual worlds of MMORPGs?

Questions 1-2 serve to confirm with other fellow players if participants of an MMOG are indeed forming a community while they all have to learn to engage in some gaming practices in the virtual game world; questions 3-7 aim for retrieval of information about the relationship between game chat and *LoL* gamer identities; question 8 digs for heterogeneity within the social group of *LoL* players, or the emergence of locally specific identities from the very discourse. Questions 7-8 compare *LoL* with MMORPGs in the attempt to elucidate on the mediation of MMOG genre differences in the identity construction.

Since we have been clear about how the discourse data are collected during gameplay, we could move on to the question about the way we analyze them.

3.2 Data analysis

3.2.1 An integrative approach

As *LoL* players share with each other the practice of *LoL* gaming, it is reasonable to assume that they are all members of a community of practice. In line with this view, it comes naturally that I will touch upon the issue of identity and relational work with the help of the community of practice theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; among others) earlier discussed in Chapter 2. In this framework, the purpose of the present study is to see how investigation into the community members' "shared repertoire" (See Section 2.1.3) could provide clues as to identity and intersubjectivity and thereby prove the value of such community-based sociolinguistic research. In particular, I believe that language, linguistic forms and meanings, as a part of the shared repertoire is one of the most enlightening ways to examine the meaning negotiation process occurring within a virtual community of practice. This is exactly why discourse analysis is the focal point in relevance to the virtual identities in my research. Employing an ethnographic approach to communities of practice, I present the discourse analysis through descriptions of social meaning in terms of player communications. The analysis will include what happens in the virtual setting of gameplay and, more importantly, how the events make sense of the social relationships and relative memberships among the community members. That is, the discursive effects of the utterances are stressed in order to unveil the social consequences brought to the gaming culture.

To explore the relationships between the use of language and identity, I make reference to the idea of stancetaking as a mediated process by which the speaker reminds the addressee of a possible link between the utterance and particular social meaning specific to the community of practice. Such social meaning is often a claim to membership in the community or specific roles within the members, or what I call “identity.” This sense of identity is successfully delivered owing to the fact that it is part of the community’s ideology (i.e. the participants’ belief that the sets of repeated stancetaking moves could stack up as particular social identities within the community). The reason why I focus on the concept of stance instead of footing, position, and other relevant terms is that its emphasis on point of view and action best describes constructionist sociolinguistics’ retreat from an essentialized view of identity and suits an empirical study of ethnography.

Based on the assumption that acts of stances index identities, I apply the analytic tool of tactics of intersubjectivity (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004, 2005) (See Section 2.1.2) to stancetaking moves in order to reveal the identity relations maintained or claimed by the conversants. Upon realizing that identity emerges from discourse where participants make meaning to each other, a look into intersubjectivity process is essential for better understanding of what identity really means to the speaker and hearer. I organize the interrelationships among the theoretical approaches I adopt for the study in Figure 3 below:

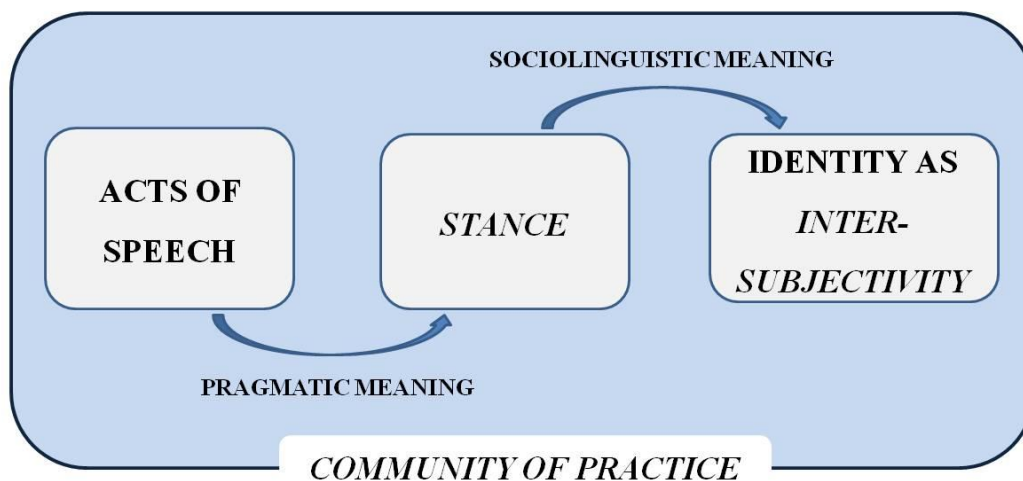


Figure 3. Interrelationships among community of practice, stancetaking, and tactics of intersubjectivity.

In Figure 3, words in italics are the theoretical concepts I resort to, including community of practice, stance(taking), and (tactics of) intersubjectivity; arrows symbolize the processes of indexing. As the figure illustrates, my whole analysis rests upon the framework of community of practice. Within this paradigm, any acts of speech during interaction could be interpreted as taking particular stances, according to the speakers' evaluations toward the contexts where the utterances take place, including certain objects and co-participants. This realization of utterances as stancetaking comes from our interpretation of language as expressing certain pragmatic functions such as committing to its degree of certainty, passing evaluative judgments, and showing emotions. Such stancetaking could then be further connected to social meanings of identity and relational work in the local community, as a result of the community's cultural model. To explore the connection between stances and identities, I use the terms of tactics of intersubjectivity to highlight the alignments in between the individual

members' respective stances. Based on the idea of intersubjectivity, only when the participants' subjective orientations to the world are displayed relative to each other can their identity relations be perceived.

One more thing to add to my analytic model is the adjustment I make to the tactics of intersubjectivity proposed by Bucholtz and Hall (2004, 2005). One of the pairs of complementary identity relations is authentication and denaturalization concerning realness and artifice. However, when it comes to the process of denaturalization, the authors raise two examples that both involve disruptions of the authentic but are actually very different from each other in terms of their social meanings: one's inconsistent self-presentation (See Bucholtz & Hall, 2004, p. 501 for the instance from Barrett, 1999) and challenge to an authenticity of an identity (See Bucholtz & Hall, 2004, p. 501 for an instance of nerd identity), respectively. While the former is to show the "the creative power of individual identity work," the latter is to underline the "the rupture of dominant ideologies" (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004, p. 501). Due to this distinction, it is better that we divide the opposite polarity against the tactic of authentication (i.e. the original denaturalization) into subcategories for the sake of clarity. I, therefore, subcategorize it into two: The new *denaturalization* and *de-authentication*. I define the new denaturalization as incorporating only the "self inconsistency" aspect of the original denaturalization. That is, it is enacted only when a sense of dissonance is created in between a person's self-presentation, such as his/her ambivalent

stancetaking acts. De-authentication, on the other hand, means to challenge or question a person's (usually others') established authentication of a certain identity. Note that, by this minor adjustment, I do not mean to overthrow the prior organization; it is only for the comprehensibility of my analysis.

To sum up, I suggest that an integrative approach of community of practice, stancetaking, and tactics of intersubjectivity could tap into online identities as situated in a virtual communication platform. There should be no doubt as to their integration because they all share the discursive view of identity as well as the view that micro actions could be given social meaning in relation to the macrostructures where they are taken.

3.2.2 Practices of language use

Before we move on to data analysis, what still needs to be clarified is which ones of the 100-match conversations should be chosen for thick description (Geertz, 1973), considering the limited space of the study. This question leads to another analytic model of mine that has a bearing with Bucholtz's (1999) framework for the community of nerds' linguistic identity practices (See Section 2.1.3). Within a community of practice, it should be clear that our goal is to search for what kinds of practices, including linguistic patterns, take on great importance in justifying one's membership in the community. In line with this view, Bucholtz subcategorizes his linguistic identity practices into positive or negative, which represent

respectively what linguistic indices individuals do and do not employ in order to actively construct a chosen identity. However, as it is difficult to contend whether a linguistic practice is being avoided or simply not needed in a particular context, I suggest that positive identity practices is all what a researcher could get from limited data sources; negative identity practices would only be clear when there are comparisons among more than two groups of speakers. Another point where I deviate from Bucholtz comes from my observation that his definition of linguistic identity practices only consists of linguistic forms such as phonology, syntax, lexicon, and discursive strategies (e.g. punning and parody). Holding that identity practices are social actions, I argue that Bucholtz's categorization of linguistic identity practices covers only a part of a community's "linguistic practices" in a more general sense. In my view, we should also consider communicative goals and discursive effects of particular speeches when developing a typology of practices of language. As a result, in my analysis I will employ not only the form-based linguistic identity practices proposed by Bucholtz but also a whole new set of practices of language that has more to do with social interaction – what I call *communicative practices*. The reason why I coin the term so is to emphasize its relation to communicative purposes within the discourse while keeping the trace of the community of practice theory. The ideas of both linguistic and communicative identity practices will help me with the choices of data for display and the structure of my analysis in the next chapter; a major focus will be placed on the most dominating or frequently employed

practices of language use in the *LoL* game chat.

As communicative practice is an analytic tool newly proposed here, I shall spend the rest of the space elaborating on how it works to underline the relationship between language and identity in a community of practice. In fact, such communicative practices could be taken as *speech activities*, which is a concept employed in Kiesling's (2009) study on style and stance. Each communicative practice is like a genre or form of participation in talk, tied with a particular communicative purpose and a range of possible uptakes of the recipients. In the terms of pragmatics, the notion of communicative practice can involve the performances of different speech acts that suit their interactional purposes. More importantly, engagements in the communicative practices could mean to achieve certain face effects on recipients of concern. Similar to linguistic practices, communicative practices, when thought of as positive identity practices, are linguistic indices that may reflect the speakers' memberships in the community. However, different from linguistic practices, communicative identity practices are meanwhile defined by follow-up uptakes of the co-participants. That is, they could easily stir up further negotiation of meaning among the members of a group, which implies that the stance claims as related to the presented communicative practices may be misunderstood, denied, or reaffirmed in the rest of discourse. The implications of communicative practices about identity or relational work, therefore, are much more robust than linguistic practices with regard to the fact that not only the participants' intents to identify themselves as certain

types of people are shown, but also the interpersonal consequences or processes of identification on the part of the recipients are seen. This is also where the tactics of intersubjectivity can be effectively put into use.



CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF IN-GAME TEXTUAL INTERACTION

“Welcome to the summoner’s rift!” When this announcement is heard – when players can start controlling the movements of the avatars with keyboard and mouse, their sociality begins. From then, the avatars are on behalf of the social actors behind them, participating in the virtual reality created by the video game company. Any moves, no matter how minor they are, may be considered socially meaningful to the speakers themselves or other participants on the spot. According to the conversational data recorded during my ethnography in *LoL*, language is a powerful tool for negotiation of identities and interpersonal relationships. In this chapter, I try to provide linguistic reasons why *LoL* players, although not known to one another, should be considered members of the same community of practice. After a general description of the norms of conduct that govern the members’ gaming practices (Section 4.1), I start to focus on how *LoL* players manage identity and relational work in the virtual community with language, at the levels of both linguistic forms (Section 4.2) and functions (Section 4.3). The analysis will get more complicated when concerning a player’s overall strategy of intersubjectivity in a game that lasts up to more than twenty minutes (Section 4.4).

4.1 *League of Legends* gamers as a community of practice

Within the design of a MOBA video game, *LoL* gamers are not consistently represented by the same avatars in a persistent world. Rather, they have to re-select their characters (or champions) for consecutive matches of the game. Any progression from before, accumulation of experience points, money, and equipment, is not carried to the present. This deviation from an ideal virtual society characterizing MMORPGs seems to undermine the value of a community-based research on *LoL*. The present study, however, suggests that there are indeed pieces of evidence showing that *LoL* gamers interact with each other as if they were members of a community. Importantly, while *LoL* gaming, they act in obedience to some norms of conduct that are closely tied to prior gameplay experience of those high-ranked or veteran players. These players often show up as users with high reputation power in game forums, streamers,¹⁰ e-Sports professionals and hosts, or simply as team members whom the gamers encounter in random games. According to what I observed from the informer players, there could be two kinds of norms of practice: One is shared across all *LoL* players, and the other is specific to particular champions or “positions” within a team.

A set of norms taken for granted by every *LoL* player is defined by the game company – the designed gameplay. Players could use whatever commands available on the interface to perform tasks in the bodies of the avatars, such as aimlessly wandering on the map or

¹⁰ “Streamers” are people who stream video games live for entertainment or living. They make money mainly through view subscriptions and donations. While they use microphones and cameras to interact with their viewers, viewers can only respond through a dedicated chat channel.

committing suicide by getting hit by enemy turrets. Nevertheless, those who know how to play the game would command their champions to kill computer-controlled minions and monsters, slay or assist in slaying enemy champions, and destroy enemy structures as quickly as possible, in order to gain advantage over the opposing team in terms of their champions' abilities and thereby win the match. Such officially enforced gaming practices are only part of the social norms here; besides them, *LoL* players tacitly acknowledge an additional set of expectations of acts and interactional patterns during gaming. These additional norms of behavior have nothing to do with the official rules of the game but are suggested by former players who have achieved much success out of that gameplay. It is believed that a game on Summoner's Rift has three distinct phases that transition along the leveling of champions and progress of destruction of structures: early game, mid game, and late game. Each phase could be bound up with particular skills in stacking up experience points and gold that help the team progress toward victory. Early game, also called "laning phase," is when players focus on farming¹¹ in the three lanes of Summoner's Rift. At this stage, players also try to zone the opponents out¹² from minion kills so as to prevent them from getting gold and experience. It is better that the opposing laners are forced to go back to base so that they would miss last hits on minions and be unable to protect their outer turrets from being destroyed. Subsequently, mid game is when players start roaming from their lanes and grouping to take

¹¹ The term "farm" here is used metaphorically by *LoL* players to refer to getting last hits on enemy minions to get gold, just like farmers harvest to get crops.

¹² To "zone out" means to set up defensive zones, keeping opponents away from certain spaces by, for example, putting them into difficult situations.

down intermediate objectives such as Dragon¹³ and the remaining turrets. At this point, vision control¹⁴ grows to be more important for detecting ambushes and spying on the movements of the enemy team. When champions are reaching level 18 and have their core items¹⁵ bought, late game is coming. During this period, the goal is to give pressure to the enemy Nexus¹⁶ by tearing down inner structures and getting buffs that increase the minions' siege ability from powerful neutral monsters such as Baron Nashor.¹⁷ Team fights are now common and crucial to victory as champions' respawn timers¹⁸ are extremely long, and survivors of the fights could easily turn over the game.

Given the design of the virtual environment of Summoner's Rift, that there are three lanes and jungle quadrants where minions and monsters are present, players have to negotiate with their teammates beforehand to figure out a way to evenly distribute these sources of experience and gold so that each player could develop their champion for the team's good.

¹³ "Dragon" is the second powerful monster on Rift, resting in the river pit near the bottom lane. It has four "species:" Mountain, Infernal, Cloud, and Ocean. Each species, when slain, gives a unique bonus to the champions of the team. Dragon respawns every six minutes.

¹⁴ "Vision control" refers to the practice of placing and protecting wards that enable the team to take control over the nearby fogs of war, which means that the enemies' whereabouts will be revealed when they pass through those areas. Good vision control would help the team escape flanks and potential ambushes. It could also serve offensive purposes such as spotting isolated targets and exposing enemy champions in vulnerable positions.

¹⁵ "Core items" are the ethnographically suggested "completed items" (or "advanced items," i.e. items that have specified recipes requiring the composition of basic items) for *LoL* champions. According to the champions' stats and roles in the game, they are recommended to purchase different sets of six core items as early as possible.

¹⁶ "Nexus" is the main structure on Rift deepest inside a team's base. It is guarded by two inner turrets and should be the final target for destruction. The team who destroys the enemy Nexus wins the game.

¹⁷ "Baron Nashor," commonly known as "Baron," is the most powerful monster on the Rift. It resides in the river pit nearby the top lane, first spawning 20 minutes after the game starts. It grants not only a great amount of gold and experience but also an aura that empowers the team's champions' nearby minions, that is, a buff good for pushing the lanes.

¹⁸ "Respawn timer," or "death timer," is the counting down of time displayed over the champions' image when they are dead. The amount of time, ranging from 10 to 52 seconds, refers to how long the players have to wait for the champions' revival and re-enter the battlefield. The time increases every 15 minutes in a match.

Which location a player is responsible for determines which “position” he/she plays within the team, and his/her “position” could further determine what champion role he/she should choose for the match. Below listed is the stereotypical matching of areas of deployment to the “position” categories and champion roles.

Table 1

The stereotypical matching of locations in charge to team positions and champion roles

Locations in Charge	Team Positions	Champion Roles
Top lane	<i>Top</i>	Tanks, Fighters
Middle lane	<i>Mid, AP Carry (AP)</i>	Mages, Slayers
Bottom lane	<i>AD Carry (AD) and Support (sup)</i>	Marksmen and Controllers
Jungle	<i>Jungle (jg)</i>	Champions with abilities favorable to ganking, ¹⁹ counterjungling, ²⁰ or dueling

In Table 1, the team positions are named in italics because they are suggested by *LoL* players but not defined by the officials. Each key location in the virtual environment of Summoner’s Rift is assigned to one team member except for the bottom lane, which is typically taken in charge by two players. What Table 1 presents is a conventional arrangement of forces in *LoL* Taiwan server and cannot be generalized too much to future play, as updates of the game could urge players to figure out more and different effective gameplays. Regarding champion

¹⁹ “Gank” is a frequently used jargon word in *LoL*, short for “gangbangkill.” It can be used as a noun to refer to a surprise attack from the enemy jungler or champion from another lane. It creates an unfair fight between different numbers of champions of the two teams. Here the term is used as a verb to describe the act of making this play.

²⁰ “Counter-jungle” refers to an in-game situation where a jungler is trying to hunt the enemy camps (i.e. the monsters in the enemy jungle) or even the enemy jungler.

roles, players have long come up with a gameplay philosophy about how the spots are filled by the defaultly defined champion roles, that is, the roles assigned to the champions based on their individual stats. Few *LoL* players would question such “rules” of the game, with the belief that this kind of arrangement is in most favor of their teams. The reasons why they incline to play this way may be traced to the play of professionals or players of previously popular *DotA* types of games. For example, the duo lane (a marksman and a controller) goes to bottom maybe because the bottom lane locates nearest to Dragon, which makes Dragon less contestable for the enemy team in early game. Mages and slayers usually play solo in the middle lane possibly due to the fact that the central location offers greater opportunities for roaming for assist attacks, which matches the nature of such champions. What is worthy of discussion at this point is that there are sets of norms of practice tagged along with different team positions and, even more specifically, individual champions. This finding is when the society’s norms of conduct are specific to certain participant categories. Table 2 organizes the dos and don’ts expected for the team positions:

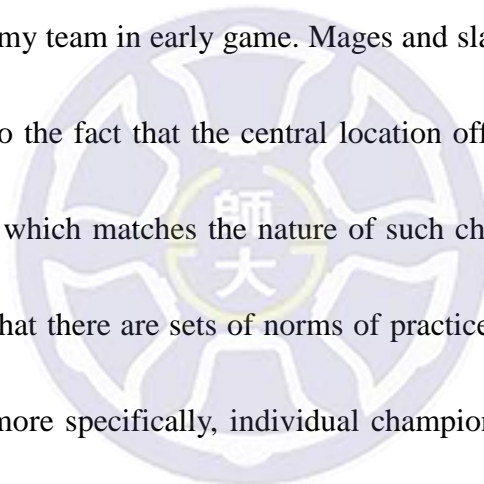


Table 2

The norms of practice expected for the five team positions

Team Positions	Norms of practice
<i>Top</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Take the summoner spell²¹ Teleport.²² At early game, teleport in to secure advantageous engagement in the emerging fights. At late game, splitpush²³ and flank²⁴ when Teleport is up for use. 2. If possible, initiate team fights and the fray with good crowd control or position-changing abilities. 3. During team fights, Fighters should reach the enemy carries and take them out before they deal damage to the allies; Tanks should peel²⁵ for the allies, especially carries.
<i>Mid, AP Carry (AP)</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pick up offensive items to build up damage output. 2. If possible, look for isolated targets to assassinate. 3. Poke²⁶ and harass the opposing laner back to base and roam to help the allies. 4. During team fights, focus damage outburst on squishy champions, especially the enemy carries. While doing that, Mages should keep a safe distance from the targets; Slayers should sneakily approach the targets and quickly get out of the fights.

²¹ “Summoner spell” is an ability possessed by the summoner (i.e. the player) rather than a particular champion, which means that no matter which champion a player chooses to play, he/she could use the spell if it is carried to the game. Normally, during Champion Select before a match, a player is allowed to choose two summoner spells to use in the game. Available summoner spells in the latest patch include Barrier, Cleanse, Exhaust, Flash, Ghost, Heal, Ignite, Smite, and Teleport.

²² “Teleport” is a summoner spell that enables the player’s champion to be teleported to an allied structure, minion, or ward.

²³ “Splitpush” refers to a strategic play where one member of a team pushes a lane (i.e. to advance the team’s minions to a point closer to the enemy base, including quickly clearing up the enemy minions and taking down the enemy turrets) while the rest push another lane. The strategy is employed to distract the enemy team from focusing their defense effort on one structure.

²⁴ “Flank” is a term used to describe a champion’s positioning him/herself in order to attack the enemy from the side or behind.

²⁵ “Peel” is used metaphorically to mean to rid an ally of the threat posed by the enemy champions, mostly by casting skillshots to delay their offensive moves.

²⁶ The term “poke” is a verb referring to dealing damage to an opponent with long ranged abilities.

AD Carry (AD)

1. Take at least one summoner spell that is only intended for defensive purposes, such as Heal²⁷ and Barrier.²⁸
2. Pick up offensive items that enhance attack damage, attack speed, armor penetration, life steal, or critical strike chance.
3. During team fights, hide at the backline while shooting the enemy champions, for fear being taken by the opponent Slayers. Be careful of crowd control abilities.²⁹

Support (sup)

1. Take the summoner spell Exhaust³⁰ or Heal to protect AD Carry from fatal attacks.
 2. Pick up items that are beneficial to the whole team, such as Locket of the Iron Solari, which gives nearby allies extra magic resistance.
 3. Do most of the vision control for the allies. Place and protect wards³¹ while destroying the enemy's. When the player's team is ahead, put wards deep in the enemy jungle to set up for picks; when the player's team is behind, ward the river and his/her own jungle to prevent the enemy from snowballing³² by invading.
 4. At laning phase, try the best to protect AD Carry from being attacked. Interrupt skill shots that would otherwise hit AD Carry or use heals and shields to sustain his/her durability. If necessary, sacrifice life for AD Carry's safety.
 5. Do not steal AD Carry's last hits on the minions.
-

²⁷ "Heal" is a summoner spell that restores an amount of health to nearby allied champions, including the caster him/herself.

²⁸ "Barrier" is a summoner spell that shields the caster champion for two seconds, helping him/her block out an amount of damage.

²⁹ "Crowd control," often abbreviated as "CC," is a type of effects that champion abilities have. The forms of crowd control such as airborne, stun, and slow are intended for reducing the fighting ability of enemy units. They interfere with the target players' control of their champions.

³⁰ "Exhaust" is a summoner spell that reduces a target enemy's movement speed, attack speed, armor and magic resist, and their damage output.

³¹ "Ward," translated in Chinese as "eye" (眼), is an object that reveals an area of the map around where it is placed.

³² "Snowball" is a term used metaphorically to mean to expand a team's lead by the advantage that it has gained so far, just like the gravitational acceleration makes a snowball easier and easier to get bigger as it rolls down a hill.

Jungle (jg)

1. Take the summoner spell Smite³³ to secure last hits on important secondary objectives like Dragon and Baron and clean up jungle monsters more quickly.
 2. Gank the lanes where the enemies are pushing too hard or low in health.
 3. Farm the jungle monsters to earn experience and gold.
 4. Start the game with the item Hunter's Talisman or Hunter's Machete, which gives the player bonus stats and abilities while jungling.
 5. Be aware of the respawn time³⁴ of Dragon and Baron.
 6. If possible, invade the enemy side of jungle to steal their monsters. Also, weaken the enemy jungle with sneak attacks.
 7. Do not reveal the position³⁵ to the enemy team.
 8. Let AP Carry get last hit on the Blue Sentinel, which allows him/her a buff that grants mana regeneration, cooldown regeneration, and extra damage. In mid-late game, consider giving the Red buff (from killing Red Brambleback) to AD Carry so that his/her basic attacks could slow the target enemies while eating up their health over time.
 9. At late game, initiate possible team fights and take as many crowd control skillshots from the enemies as possible.
-

What Table 2 suggests is a general observation of in-game decisions made by the five positions distributed among a team of *LoL* players. Although this metagame³⁶ is constantly shifting following the updates of the game mechanics such as imbalanced items and champions, the foundation is always the same – to gain optimal amounts of experience and

³³ “Smite” is a summoner spell that deals an amount of true damage (i.e. a type of damage that ignores armor and magic resistance) on a target, usually a neutral monster.

³⁴ “Respawn time” is an amount of time one has to wait for a monster to respawn after it is killed.

³⁵ Here the “position” refers to where a champion is on the map of the Rift.

³⁶ “Metagame,” often clipped as “meta,” is a collection of strategies that are said to be the best ways of winning the game.

gold. Now narrow the scope to individual champions. Even though the above norms of conducts pretty much define what roles particular champions should play in the game, there are variations and exceptions pertaining to the champions' idiosyncratic abilities that give rise to specific player decisions. For example, Malphite, as a tank or fighter champion, has an ultimate ability of crowd control; when it is triggered, Malphite dashes to a target location and knocks nearby enemies up for seconds. This ability makes Malphite a perfect candidate for initiating a team fight; with a dash, Malphite could easily make his way to the enemy team's back line to mess with their damage dealers. Another example is Shaco, whose officially defined champion role is slayer. However, uniquely, Shaco has the ability to become invisible and teleport to a target position, which makes him a great jungler, as one of junglers' job is to gank enemy champions without their knowledge. As Shaco has the base statistics of a slayer, he is too squishy to peel for the team's carries; instead, selecting Shaco calls for another style of cooperative gameplay where his role is to splitpush and come in a team fight later to clean up the remaining targets.

These unwritten rules have bound every player of *LoL* in a way that they expect not only each other but also themselves to behave like professionals who know vividly how to obtain optimal sources for winning the game in the least time. Through a lens like this *LoL* players could be seen as a virtual community of practice (i.e. *LoL* gaming) who establish norms for inspecting membership. The organized strategies with five positions demonstrate the actual

collaborative relationships that a previously studied community of practice should feature.

The next section is going to show that, in addition to the mutual engagement in gaming,

language is part of the shared practice that traces the presence of the community.

4.2 Linguistic practices of *League of Legends* gamers

Consider the following interaction during *LoL* gaming:

(1) Game No. 53 (recorded on September 20, 2015)³⁷

- | | | |
|---|----------------|---------------------------|
| 1 | 雷玟 (Top) : | 全中
<i>quan zhong</i> |
| 2 | 沃維克 (Jungle) : | 我補裝
<i>wo buzhuang</i> |

For an “outsider,” it seems very difficult to make sense of Excerpt 1, even though it only contains two lines of talk. It might be hard to believe that the conversation involves serious negotiation of gameplay strategies. Of course, the failure to comprehend the text may be due to its being out of the context, but as a *LoL* gamer myself, I could easily grasp what it means from just the way it is. Excerpt 1 is retrieved from one of the games’ conversational data I recorded for research. What is amazing here is that there appears to be a special register

³⁷ All of the excerpts of game chat used in this study, like (1) here, do not show the entire chat logs of the particular games, so I skimp on using text omission markers [...] for saving space. Also, in order to simulate the actual user interface of the game, the excerpts will present the in-game messages in color; basically speaking, the color blue is used on names of the allies’ champions; red is applied to names of the enemies’ champions. As for the system messages, dark orange is used on those regarding player achievements while beige marks out the alert pings.

³⁸ For the sake of the ethical reason mentioned before, the pseudonyms of my informers are replaced with the names of the champions they played as well as the team positions they were in in the particular games.

esoteric to the non-community members of *LoL*. Table 3 organizes the linguistic identity practices of my *LoL* informers.

Table 3
Linguistic identity practices of League of Legends gamers

Linguistic Level	Identity Practices
Morpho-syntax	Employment of short sentences with abbreviations and omissions
Lexicon	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Employment of popular youth slang (e.g. 屌,³⁹ 嘴砲, 神__, 無言, 傻眼, 笑噴, 戳, 殘念, 節奏, 奇葩, 屁孩, 各種__, 誰受得了, 暈, 專業__, 我也是醉了) Employment of taboo words and pejorative names (e.g. 幹, 秒, 靠, 媽的, 垃圾, 87, 白痴, 廢物) Employment of lexemes particular to CMC, including quasi-nonverbal cues, specialized abbreviations, etc. (e.g. = =, @@, 0.0, XD, 唉, 哈, 嗯, ..., zz, sor, 3Q, thx) Employment of MMOG jargons (not specific to <i>LoL</i>) (e.g. lag, 掛, 外掛) Employment of <i>LoL</i> or MOBA jargons (e.g. 輸出, 頭, 眼, 吃, 出, 養, GG, 雷)
Others	Employment of expressions with typos or wrong input language

The linguistic level of phonology is of great importance for high-school identities like jocks, burnouts, and nerds to be indexed linguistically. However, as phonological cues are deprived in text-based CMC, in our conversational data we cannot detail any practices with regard to pronunciation and intonation. Instead, language form that is the most revealing about the

³⁹ The underline “__” here (also present in *shen*__, *gezhong*__, and *zhuanye*__) represents a “variable” that can be any words of certain parts of speech that could collocate with the slang words *pi*, *shen*, *gezhong*, and *zhuanye*. See the detailed discussion in following subsections.

social identity of *LoL* gamers is only at levels of morpho-syntax and lexicon, which organizes the following subsections.

4.2.1 Morpho-syntax

With regard to morpho-syntax, player interactions in this world are mostly built upon truncated sentences. Possible reasons for the syntactic pattern are two. First, owing to the gameplay of *LoL* such a real-time strategy game,⁴⁰ there is little time for player-controlled avatars to hang out and chill as they do in many MMORPGs. Instead, players must bring full attention to the game for the entire time so that they could more efficiently gather experience and gold and avoid being slain by enemy champions. In other words, it is crucial that the player never let go of their hands from the keyboard and mouse, skillfully pressing the Q, W, E, and R keys to use abilities and moving the cursor to properly position the champion for dodges and kills. Adding that posting messages in the chat box needs the player to strike Enter to switch the keyboard key function from controlling the avatars to spelling out language, a great challenge is posed to players who want to play and articulate at the same time and thus decreases their will to talk while gaming or, as shown here, shortens their

⁴⁰ “Real-time strategy” is another label to refer to the genre of MOBA. This label emphasizes the essence of the game genre – the fact that players of the two opposing teams fight for the time to increase resources for launching attacks or defending their bases. These games are different from turn-based strategy games in that their players do not have time to carefully think about the next move without having to worry about the actions of their opponents. They are also different from MMORPGs in that their virtual worlds for avatars are essentially battlefields; there are no refuges or “cities” where players are immune to monster attacks. In other words, compared to other genres of MMOGs, players of real-time strategy games should be fully aware of what is happening around them.

speech. Another reason for the linguistic behavior may be that players follow the conventions of how to interact with their teammates while *LoL* gaming and do not think too much about their wording. This explanation attributes the responsibility to veteran or professional players who have thought of a way to efficiently communicate with each other under the above-mentioned constraint. Excerpt 1 above is a good example to show *LoL* gamers' linguistic practices in respect of syntax. In Line 1, the top laner 雷玟⁴¹ is able to express her thought about what the team should do at the point of the game with only two Chinese characters, *quanzhong*, suggesting that all of them should unite on the middle lane to push the enemy team's middle turrets and structures. A more complete version of the utterance would be *quanbu de ren dou lai zhonglu tuita* (全部的人都來中路推塔). In line 2, the team's jungler 沃維克 also uses a pithy way to chat in game. He responds to 雷玟 with *wobuzhuang*, which consists of a subject (*wo*) and a shortened particle (*buzhuang*). *Buzhuang* is the abbreviated form of *buchong zhuangbei* (補充裝備) or *buqi zhuangbei* (補齊裝備), meaning to purchase items that the champion could afford at the time of speaking to master his build.⁴² In addition to abbreviation, *LoL* in-game chat logs are full of isolated phrases or utterances with omitted subjects, verbs, objects, etc. Consider the interaction below:

⁴¹ In my analysis I will retain the original forms of the champions' names on the Taiwanese server of the game, so that readers will not have trouble figuring out what the referents or meanings of more game-related esoteric words are. Note that, in the text, Chinese characters are also provided in the parentheses for fear that readers may not comprehend some of the expressions' Romanized forms.

⁴² "Build" is a game jargon that refers to the choices of items to purchase when one plays a particular champion. A player would normally consider his/her team position and the controlled champion's statistics and attributes to be able to come up with the best item build for the match.

(2) Game No. 29 (recorded on August 29, 2015)

- 1 希維爾 (AD Carry) : 一下
yi xia
- 2 沒血
mei xie
- 3 ==
- 4 潘森 (Support) : 為什麼要打~~?
weishenme yao da

希維爾's utterances reflect what has happened to her in the *LoL* virtual game world. She has just been hit by an enemy champion for once (*yi xia*), which lowers her health to a great extent (*mei xie*). Lines 1 and 2 are nonsententials or fragments that could be considered to be lacking certain components of making basic sentences: *Yi xia* and *mei xie* may be short for *ta da wo yixia jiu mei xie le* (他打我一下就沒血了). In similar sense, 潘森's response *weisheme yao da* (為什麼要打) could be stretched as *ni weisheme yao han ta da* (你為什麼要和他打). Other than the reason that the environment makes communication here so idiosyncratic, such omissions of parts of a sentence can be ascribed to the fact that, in the chat window, players are oftentimes talking about prior or possible plays in the game, which normally concerns referents that are easily inferred from the context and thus need not be verbalized. Even if some team members are nowhere around the discussed incident, they could roughly grasp what those shortened utterances mean by taking a peep at the minimap.⁴³

Take Excerpt 2 for example. Figure 4 is the minimap zooming up from the screenshot of *LoL*

⁴³ "Minimap," as its name suggests, is a reduced overview of the entire map of Summoner's Rift, which can be found in the corner of the *LoL* heads-up display. It not only shows the positions of the two teams' structures but also the movements of champions and minions not obscured by the fog of war.

gameplay taken right before the Excerpt 2 conversation took place.



Figure 4. The zooming-up minimap from the screenshot of gameplay before Excerpt 2 conversation.

潘森 (the blue-circled champion image at the lower-left corner) may have noticed on the minimap that 希維爾 (the blue-circled image that is partly covered up by another champion around the center of the middle lane) has been chased by an enemy champion (represented by a red-circled image) before she posts the message. 潘森 is then able to follow what 希維爾 is saying.

4.2.2 Youth slang

Now let's turn our attention to lexicon, the vocabulary of *LoL* gamers' special register. As Table 3 shows, I have organized the specialized or slang lexical items found in my data by

categorizing them into subsets of the language's lexicon, which are stereotypically associated with different social groups.⁴⁴

To begin with, the *LoL* gamers under my investigation use youth slang items to communicate with each other. These lexemes are colloquial words and phrases that are closely tied with the linguistic creativity and virtuosity characteristic of young people (Tobin, 1972). They are mostly used to reinforce a feeling of connection with a fashionable trend in the society at the time (Eble, 1996).⁴⁵ Within the 400 *LoL* gamers⁴⁶ I played with for this study, there are totally 50 (12.5%) who use one or more than one youth slang term during game chat. See below for the most frequently used youth slang in my data. Note that, for you to easily follow the discussion, in the following excerpts arrows “→” will be used to indicate the lines where the target instances of language use are present; if the language use in question is lexical, then the terms themselves will be further framed by borders to be distinguished from other components of the sentences.

⁴⁴ Such categorization will not be clear-cut because a lexical item might fit the criteria of more than one category, ideologically associated with more than one social identity. For example, while *feiwu* is normally seen as offensive language and associated with gangsters and males in general, it, in the meanwhile, serves well for jokingly name-calling someone really close in the recent generation of youngsters. In line with this, *feiwu* could also be an instance of youth slang.

⁴⁵ As the trend that the youth slang reflects is essentially a gradual change or development along the time axis, the exemplary slang terms listed here are ephemeral in nature. Some may become obsolete or be replaced by newly invented words in coming years.

⁴⁶ The number “400” (players) is the result of multiplying 100 (matches of game) and 4 (teammates I played with per game). The reason why I take the number of players who use a lexical item as the statistical unit, instead of the number of times it is used overall the 100 games, is that I want to avoid the influence of personal pet phrases on the result. That is, a particular speaker may overuse a term, in many different contexts, which messes up the generalizability of how often the slang items in question are taken advantage of in MMOGs.

- (3) Game No. 96 (recorded on November 8, 2015)
- 1 李星 (Jungle) : 玩刀妹真丟他勿臉
wan daomei zhen diu ta de lian
 ‘This is a shame to the champion that you play her this bad.’⁴⁷
- 2 伊瑞莉雅 (Top) : 吵屁
chao pi
 ‘Shut up.’
- (4) Game No. 55 (recorded on September 20, 2015)
- 1 凱特琳 (AD Carry) : 部打了啦 JG 根本神不會玩
bu da le la JG genben shen bu hui wan
 ‘I don’t want to play anymore. Our jungler is a very bad player.’

In Excerpts 3 and 4, the youth slang terms in question are *pi* and *shen*. They are syntactically dependent in that they need to go with their modifyees to be able to take on their slang meanings. *Pi* is close to “my ass” in English, which is an interjection expressing disapproval or disbelief toward an action denoted by a preceding verb. In Excerpt 3, 李星 accuses 伊瑞莉雅 of not knowing how to play the champion. 伊瑞莉雅 then disagrees with him by judging his words as annoying (*chao*). With *chao* “suffixed” with *pi*, 伊瑞莉雅 is able to show her disdain for 李星’s accusation to a greater extent. On the other hand, *shen* as a slang term is more like a modifier that necessarily precedes a modifyee, usually a noun-use of gerund. In Excerpt 4, 凱特琳 one-sidedly complains about her team’s jungler (*JG*) by questioning his ability to play the game. Her employment of *shen* helps exaggerate what she

⁴⁷ For readers to obtain more contextual meaning of the original Mandarin Chinese utterances, the English translations provided in my excerpts focus more on the originals’ communicative purposes instead of the literal meaning of their linguistic components.

says because it transfers the unimaginability and powerfulness from people’s impression of “God” (*shen*) to the particular concept or thinking. The syntactic pattern of *shen* can also be found in the cases of *gezhong* and *zhuanye*. Now consider *zuipao*:

(5) Game No. 18 (recorded on August 23, 2015)

1 達瑞文 (AD Carry) : 你不幫我也 510

ni bu bang wo ye 510

‘Even though you did not help me, I could still get 5 kills.’

→ 2 古拉格斯 (Jungle) : 高中還可以那麼嘴砲

gaozhong hai keyi namo zuipao

‘High school students nowadays could be so good at trolling.’

Zuipao, different from *pi* and *shen*, can be self-sufficiently meaningful. It is used as a stative verb or an adjective phrase to describe someone who is all mouth and no trousers or deliberately flames⁴⁸ other participants to spoil their positive feelings. In Excerpt 5, after 達瑞文 ticks 古拉格斯 off for not helping him lane against the enemy AD Carry, 古拉格斯 retorts with a complaint about what a flamer 達瑞文 is. In Table 3, one may also notice that there are youth slang terms formed as if they were well-formed sentences. Take *woyeshizuile* for example:

⁴⁸ To “flame” or “troll” means to send out hostile messages that typically insult or provoke people, especially in the context of online websites or forums.

(6) Game No.92 (recorded on November 8, 2015)

- 1 布朗姆 (Support) : 5 龍加巴龍
wulong jia balong
‘The enemies have five-dragon plus Baron buffs.’
- 2 你們確定可以打？
nimen queding keyi da
‘Are you sure we are able to fight against them?’
- 3 死不投降
si bu touxiang
‘Why don’t you surrender?’
- 4 我也是醉了
wo ye shi zui le
‘I have had enough of this.’

Even though *woyeshizuile* has the whole package of a complete sentence and even acts as an independent clause here, standing alone in a line of utterance, it should be saved in brain as a formulaic chunk and used as if it cannot be analyzed into smaller linguistic components. In youth communities, *woyeshizuile* is used to deliver a sense of helplessness toward what has been discussed or done by others. In Excerpt 6, 布朗姆 incessantly complains about his teammates’ refusing to surrender at the team’s major disadvantage. His additional remark *woyeshizuile* shows that he has lost his senses because of the insensible decision made by his teammates; in this use, *zui* is close in meaning to another youth slang term *yun* (暈). Although the lexical items introduced so far are later generally realized as youth slang, their terminological origins could be traced back to more specific categories of the popular or youth culture. For instance, the phrase structure *shen*___ is probably affiliated with the Internet slang *shenhui fu* (神回覆), which is wildly used in online forums or social networking

services to describe comments that are intellectually stimulating or interesting . *Woyeshizuile* may derive from Jin Yong's (金庸) wuxia (武俠, 'martial arts chivalry') novels where Linghu Chong (令狐冲) despises flatterers by ironically saying that he would get drunk and pass out (*zuidao*) if someone fawns on others to get what he/she wants.

4.2.3 Offensive slang

Another set of vocabulary that may be revealing about *LoL* gamers' membership in the community is offensive words, or fixed expressions understood as impolite by people. These words are stereotypically related to males, youngsters, and people who engage in "misconduct" defined by the society. Out of the 400 co-players, 55 (13.75%) are involved in the use of such terms. I categorize my findings of them into two: taboo words and pejorative names.

Taboo words, viewed interchangeably with cursing (Jay, 1992, 2000) and swearing (Ljung, 2011), are lexical items that serve emotional needs of the speakers and produce emotional impacts on listeners. In old times, most of them were strictly forbidden in media and government held institutions. Examples of taboo words from the *LoL* chat log include *gan* (幹 or 乾), *chao* (抄), *kao* (靠), *kaobei* (靠北), *made* (媽的), and *fk* (abbreviated from *fuck*). Excerpts below demonstrate some of their employment in the virtual context:

(7) Game No. 1 (recorded on August 2, 2015)

1 伊芙琳 (Jungle) : 抓輸出?

zhua shuchu

‘Why didn’t you catch their damage dealers?’

→ 2

乾

gan

‘Fuck.’

(8) Game No. 52 (recorded on September 20, 2015)

→ 1 達瑞斯 (Top) : 秒

chao

‘Fuck.’

2

贏打到輸耶

ying da dao shu ye

‘We went from winning to losing.’

(9) Game No. 95 (recorded on November 8, 2015)

→ 1 卡特蓮娜 (Mid) : 他媽的

tamade

‘Motherfucker.’

2 狻宿 (AD Carry) :

?

3 卡特蓮娜 (Mid) :

我要帶傳送結果按到旁邊的淨化= =

wo yao dai chuansong jieguo an dao pangbian de jinghua

‘I originally planned to take the summoner spell Teleport to the game but ended up mis-picking the nearby Cleanse.’

As shown in Excerpts 7-9, swear words resemble interjections in that they are used primarily for emotional purposes, especially for a relief of anger or frustration. In Excerpt 7, 伊芙琳 is pissed at her teammates for not focusing attacks on enemy Carries; she swears *gan* to manifest this emotional state. In Excerpt 8, *chao* is the emotional reaction of frustration 達瑞斯 expresses after he learns that his team loses the advantage they had formerly gotten.

Tamade in Excerpt 9 is an expression of 卡特蓮娜's self-blame over her picking the wrong summoner spell to use in the game. With taboo words, one has to notice that negative emotions are not the only kind of responses elicited. Consider Excerpt 10:

- (10) Game No. 8 (recorded on August 15, 2015)
- 1 達瑞斯已經成為傳說啦!
daruisi yijing chengwei chuanshuo la
 'Darius is legendary!'
 - 2 飛斯 (Support) : CC
 'Let me borrow your power.'
 - 3 易大師 (Jungle) : 靠
kao
 'For crying out loud.'
 - 4 我軍消滅敵隊!
wojun xiaomie didui
 'Ally team has scored an ace!'
 - 5 葛雷夫 (AD Carry) : 幹XDDD
gan
 'Fuck.'
- 

When 達瑞斯 becomes a legendary (*chuanshuo*)⁴⁹ and later annihilates the whole group of enemy champions, his teammates express their astonishment by saying swear words. Here *kao* and *gan* have no connotation of anything bad; instead, their evocative power is used by the speakers to unleash surprise emotions at the moment.

The other major category of offensive words in *LoL* is pejorative names, also called *epithets* (Ljung, 2011). In most cases, pejorative names are negatively evaluative nouns

⁴⁹ In *LoL*, slaying more than seven enemy champions in a row, not being shot down (killed) halfway, could trigger the “legendary” sound from the *LoL* announcer.

directed at people who have frustrated the speakers in some ways. Within the many pejorative names *LoL* gamers use to call others, *lese* (垃圾), *87* (or *beiqi*, 北七, *baichi*, 白癩), *feiwu* (廢物) are the most frequently used ones. Excerpts below show how they are used during interaction:

(11) Game No. 41 (recorded on September 6, 2015)

- 1 雷玟 (Top) : 垃圾打野
lese daye
'Garbage jungler.'
- 2 零作用
lingzuoyong
'Zero contribution.'
- 3 雷珂煞 (Jungle) : 垃圾TOP
lese TOP
'Garbage top laner.'

(12) Game No. 58 (recorded on September 25, 2015)

- 1 狻宿 (Mid) : 你白癩嗎
ni baichi ma
'Are you an idiot,'
- 2 JG
'Jungle?'
- 3 你這樣開大的 ****
ni zheyang kaida de
'You use your ultimate ability like this.'
- 4 阿姆姆 (Jungle) : ==失誤一次需要罵人嗎
shiwu yi ci xuyao maren ma
'Do you really have to blame me for making a single mistake?'

(13) Game No. 34 (recorded on September 6, 2015)

- 1 希維爾 (AD Carry) : 你們
nimen
'You,'
- 2 卡特在後面
kate zai houmian
'The enemy Katarina is right behind her allies.'
- 3 哀廢物一堆
ai feiwu yidui
'(Sighing). A lot of rubbish.'
- 4 這上路只會追
zhe shanglu zhi hui zhui
'Our top laner can do nothing but chasing enemies recklessly.'
- 5 哀
ai
'(Sighing).'

As shown, calling the addressees *lese*, *baichi*, and *feiwu* are acts of ritualistic insulting, by which the speakers are able to achieve a negative impact on the listeners. Behind such verbal aggression are particular reasons that have incurred the speakers' displeasure, e.g. the fact that a player is incompetent (*lingzuoyong*) (Excerpt 11) or makes a mistake (*shiwu*) (Excerpt 12). Importantly, an act of name-calling "provides information about how the speaker views him/herself in relation to others" (Jay, 2000, p. 85). That is, by name-calling, the speaker indicates the notable differences on the part of the addressee by comparing or reducing him/her to an entity with unfavorable properties. In the terms of conceptual metaphor, the speaker is transferring negative connotations from a source concept to the addressee as the target conceptual domain. Refer back to Excerpts 11-13 again. *LoL* players attempt to transfer

the qualities of uselessness from *lese* and *feiwu* and intellectual disability from *baichi* to the offended. This associative power is even more evident on the ethnographically specific pejorative names that are found in my data. See the following excerpts:

(14) Game No. 47 (recorded on September 13, 2015)

- 1 逆命 (Mid) : 不來幫
bu lai bang
'Not helping.'
- 2 就走
jiu zou
'Just left.'
- 3 難怪下路死那麼慘
nanguai xialu si namo can
'No wonder the bottom lane was losing.'
- 4 布里茨 (Support) : 我?
wo
'Me?'
- 5 逆命 (Mid) : 銅牌 SUP 無解
tongpai SUP wujie
'Bronze medal Support, you have played so bad that we cannot do anything about it.'

(15) Game No. 84 (recorded on October 25, 2015)

- 1 卡特蓮娜 (Mid) : 我被住爆 jg 在哪裡?
wo bei zhubao jg zai nali
'Our jungler was nowhere to be found when I was ganked time after time.'
- 2 勒布朗 (Support) : 自己不會插眼?
ziji bu hui chayan
'You should ward and gain vision by yourself.'
- 3 沃維克 (Jungle) : 自己不插眼
ziji bu chayan
'You should ward and gain vision by yourself.'


diduan

‘Low Elo player.’

By calling people *tongpai* and *diduan*, the players are taking a superior stance in another blatant way. The two pejorative names, compared to *lese*, *baichi*, and *feiwu*, are not as conventionalized for the general public but rather innovative and only viable in the game worlds of *LoL* or other MMOGs alike. *LoL* has a ladder ranking system where players compete with each other to win medals, including Bronze (*tongpai*, 銅牌), Silver (*yinpai*, 銀牌), Gold (*jinpai*, 金牌), Platinum (*baijin*, 白金), and Diamond (*zuanshi*, 鑽石), in an order from low Elo⁵⁰ (*diduan*, 低端) to high Elo (*gaoduan*, 高端). Therefore, *tongpai* and *diduan* are ideal source concepts for disparaging name calling in this context because they represent the group of players who are the worst at the game. It is clear that 逆命 and 沃維克 from the above excerpts try to associate bad performances of those players with their addressees.

4.2.4 Computer-mediated communication slang

Still another category of slang that catches on in the in-game conversations among *LoL* players is the vocabulary words specific to CMC, especially *Internet language* and *Netspeak*. They are the linguistic constructs that arise out of the electronic character of different

⁵⁰ “Elo” refers to a rating system designed for calculating how skillful a player is relative to other competitors. The Elo rating system has been used for multiplayer competitions of some team sports, video games, and strategy board games.

computer-mediated formats such as instant messaging, email, and social network services and are therefore associated with digital product users or modern or city people in general. Based on my informers' use of language, there are mainly two categories of lexemes particular to CMC: quasi-nonverbal cues and specialized abbreviations.

Quasi-nonverbal cues refer to any stream of representations of non-verbal expressions or behaviors that are transmitted through the typewriter keyboard. They could be further subcategorized into emoticons and onomatopoeic words that carry meanings particular to the communication platforms created by electronic devices.⁵¹ Let's look at the respective details of the two. Emoticons, or *smileys*, are the combinations of keyboard characters, especially punctuation marks and letters that resemble facial expressions. The most frequently appearing emoticons in my conversational data include = =, @@, 0.0, and XD. There are overall 102 of the 400 players (25.5%) who resort to these innovations in order to express certain attitudes toward others' speech or something happening around them. The following excerpts demonstrate how emoticons are relevant to the interactions among *LoL* players:

(16) Game No. 22 (recorded on August 23, 2015)

- 1 飛斯 (Mid) : 你在幹嘛
ni zai ganma
'What are you doing?'
- 2 李星 (Jungle) : 當機
dangji

⁵¹ Although most of the onomatopoeic words collected for the study derive from other forms of written texts, they are used in a completely different way in CMC, as slang terms that have special meanings for netizens.

‘My computer just crashed.’

→ 3 飛斯 (Mid) : ☹☹

(17) Game No. 8 (recorded on August 15, 2015)

1 飛斯 (敵人) 正在大殺特殺!

feisi zhengzai dashatesha

‘Enemy Fizz is on a killing spree!’

→ 2 飛斯 (Mid) : @@

→ 3 葛雷夫 (AD Carry) : @@

(18) Game No. 3 (recorded on August 7, 2015)

1 薩科 (Jungle) : 幹

gan

‘Fuck.’

2 你媽針對我

nima zhendui wo

‘The enemies are totally directed against me.’

→ 3 索娜 (Support) : 0.0

4 薩科 (Jungle) : 兩個同時開我大

liang ge tongshi kai wo da

‘The two enemy champions used their ultimate abilities on me at the same time.’

(19) Game No. 22 (recorded on August 23, 2015)

→ 1 布朗姆 (Support) : 我說過 雷文打不贏我 XD

wo shuo guo leiwen da bu ying wo

‘As I mentioned earlier, Riven can never take me down.’

We have seen in these excerpts that, even though there are a variety of emoticons used among *LoL* players, they serve completely different communication purposes. For example, = = is a display of the speaker’s speechlessness; as Excerpt 16 shows, 飛斯 uses the emoticon to

express that he is both surprised and upset at the situation in which 李星's computer is crashing down but cannot do anything about it. The emoticons @@ and 0.0 can accept more flexible interpretation, but mostly seen as looks of astonishment. That is, two @ or 0 in a sequence depict a facial expression with two eyes wide open. In Excerpt 17, 飛斯 and 葛雷夫 say nothing but to show their surprise @@ at a lost team fight, where an enemy champion is killing spree (*dashatesha*); in Excerpt 18, 索娜 uses 0.0 to convey that she is a bit shocked at 薩科's strong reaction about being targeted by the enemy team. Note that @@ and 0.0 in most cases have an effect of easing the tense atmosphere of talks. Still another emoticon XD is a pictographic way to show the expression of laughter; when the reader tilt his/her head sideways, X shapes like squeezed eyes and D a wide opened mouth. As shown in Excerpt 19, 布朗姆 is smug about his ability to take down 雷玟; with the use of XD, he makes his words more like a joke rather than a display of arrogance. Let's now turn to onomatopoeic words found in the *LoL* game world. Onomatopoeic words are language that phonetically imitates the sound that it describes; in the current context, they only refer to those written particles resembling exclamations. Sigh, laughter, and a grunt of acknowledgement are the three most expressed human reactions through such written onomatopoeia, recorded respectively by Chinese characters *ai* (唉), *ha* (哈), and *en* (嗯). In my data, there are totally 33 of the 400 players (8.25%) who engage in the practice of these exclamative words. The following excerpts demonstrate their use during *LoL* gaming.

(20) Game No. 32 (recorded on September 4, 2015)

- 1 路西恩 (AD Carry) : 中上崩盤
zhong shang bongpan
'We are losing the mid and top lanes.'
- 2 卡特蓮娜 (Mid) : 差距[唉]
chaju ai
'We are so falling behind. (Sighing).'

(21) Game No. 6 (recorded on August 9, 2015)

- 1 李星 (Jungle) : 我以為 w 沒改 我第一次玩我就點=
wo yiwei w mei gai wo di yi ci wan wo jiu dian
'I thought the champion's W ability has not been changed. I picked it up when I played her for the first time.'
- 2 菲歐拉 (Top) : 我平常都點 W 現在換 Q [哈哈]
wo pingchang dou dian W xianzai huan Q haha
'Ordinarily I pick up the W ability first, but recently I pick Q up instead. (Laughing).'

(22) Game No. 58 (recorded on September 25, 2015)

- 1 飛斯 (Top) : 達瑞斯
daruisi
'Darius,'
- 2 好像跳了
hoxiang tiao le
'He seems to have logged out the game.'
- 3 阿姆姆 (Jungle) : [恩]
en
'(Grunting).'

Excerpts 20-22 show how the three onomatopoeic words function to present the speakers' different emotions or reactions at the moments of talk. In Excerpt 20, 卡特蓮娜 uses *ai* to stress her helplessness toward her team's falling behind (*chaju*) after their top and mid laners

lost to the opposing champions. In Excerpt 21, 菲歐拉 adds *haha* to what she says in order to bring out a casual vibe to the conversation. In Excerpt 22, 阿媽媽 agrees with 飛斯's words by using the particle *en* (嗯). What is worthy of mention here is that the suggested emotional noises are not necessarily “genuine” (Crystal, 2006), which means that the senders may not actually make the noises in reaction; instead, these words seem to behave like slang, part of which meaning is only available to the community. In line with this, the exclamative particles here mean something more than those used in formal written documents. Take *ai* for example. While *ai* is the most used onomatopoeic word in *LoL* game chat, it is not a popular choice of word to express helplessness in everyday speech. Actually, online gamers have given *ai* pejorative overtones. That is, *ai* suggests not only that the speaker is disappointed at the current situation but also that the speaker belittles a target participant or bystander. Refer back to Excerpt 13. It is clear that 希維爾's use of *ai* is an aggressive one; instead of saying that 希維爾 has no choice but to accept the team's failure, it is more true that she chooses to blame her teammates for the downfall. This peculiar nature of slang – that its meaning is exclusive to a speech community – can also be seen in two more quasi-nonverbal cues that are found from my data: ... and zz. These two are neither emoticons nor onomatopoeic words; they depict physical conditions of someone, the states of speechlessness (...) and sleeping (zz) respectively. See the excerpts below for their use in the actual conversations:

(23) Game No. 52 (recorded on September 20, 2015)

- 1 達瑞斯 (Top) : JG
'Jungler,'
- 2 出個泰坦呀
chu ge taitan ya
'You may want to build Titanic Hydra.'
- 3 雷柯煞 (Jungle) : 但是
danshi
'But,'
- 4 達瑞斯 (Top) : ?
- 5 雷柯煞 (Jungle) : 我錢不夠
wo qian bu gou
'I do not have enough money.'
- 6 達瑞斯 (Top) :

(24) Game No. 41 (recorded on September 6, 2015)

- 1 雷柯煞 (Jungle) : 李星都來了
lixing dou lai le
'The enemy Lee Sin had come.'
- 2 我過去也是死
wo guoqu ye shi si
'I would have been killed if I had gone to assist you.'
- 3 雷玟 (Top) : 李星來了
lixing lai le
'Lee Sin came,'
- 4 誰開的?
shei kai de
'And who initiated the fight?'
- 5 雷柯煞 (Jungle) : 2 換 1?
2 huan 1
'Our deaths exchanged for only one kill?'
- 6 雷玟 (Top) : 你開的?
ni kai de
'Didn't you initiate the fight?'
- 7 雷柯煞 (Jungle) : 誰叫我開的
shei jiao wo kai de
'Who asked me to do that?'

- 8 雷玟 (Top) : 白癡 
baichi
 ‘Idiot.’
- 9 雷柯煞 (Top) : 你在那 G 點他
ni zai na G dian ta
 ‘You were pinging him.’
- 10 雷玟 (Top) : 笑了
xiao le
 ‘That is funny.’

Compared to most onomatopoeic words discussed above, ... and zz as slang terms are more conventionalized in a way that they cannot be easily made sense of by laymen who do not engage in Internet-based communication. A line of text appearing with only dots, or ellipsis, is a way of telling others that the speaker is startled by something happening and becomes speechless afterwards. In Excerpt 23, after being informed that the jungler does not have enough money to purchase Titanic, a powerful item for short-range damage dealers, 達瑞斯 sends out the text of mere dots to show that he does not know what to say. As for the string of letters zz, it means that the speaker falls unconscious or asleep because he/she cannot deal with the current situation or is overwhelmed by helplessness. In this case, it is obvious that the bodily reaction described is not at all genuine; the speaker does not really become unconscious or asleep, or he/she would not have sent the message in question. In Excerpt 24, 雷柯煞 and 雷玟 have an argument about who should be blamed for starting a fight (*kai*); in Line 8, 雷玟 is so mad that she calls 雷柯煞 by an insulting name, *baichi*, and uses zz to just show her incapability of doing anything about 雷柯煞’s unreasonable refusal to accept

the mistake he made. In fact, using ellipsis to express speechlessness and *zz* to express helplessness is not limited to CMC but very common in comics where dialogues are in the forms of written texts. Because of this, the slang usage of the combinations of characters should also be well recognized by the community of comic readers.

In addition to quasi-nonverbal slang words, the environment of CMC also gives rise to abbreviations that symbolize intended messages. The purpose behind such innovative language is simple: for the convenience of transferring the existing correspondences between form and meaning into a realm of interaction. Among the 400 players I interacted with, there are 42 in total (10.5%) who take advantage of this type of CMC slang. The abbreviations most frequently used in the *LoL* player conversations are *sor*, *3Q*, *thx*, and *fk*, which are the products of different morphological processes. *Sor* is short for “sorry,” an instance of back-clipping; *3Q*, meaning “thank you,” in Crystal’s (2006) term, is like combinations of rebus in which the sound values of the numeral 3 in Chinese and letter *Q* act as the two English words; *thx* and *fk* are reduced forms for “thanks” and “fuck” after they are medial-clipped and the sound values of their codas are replaced by the homophones *x* and *k* respectively.

4.2.5 Massively multiplayer online game jargons

More closely related to the gamer identity are slang terms limited to the community of

online gaming. They are more like technical terms or jargons because their users could be easily defined in terms of the clearly bounded field of expertise – the area of online gaming. There could be two types of such MMOG jargons in the game chat in dependence on their specificity to MMOGs in general or only the virtual world of *LoL*. With respect to those exclusively understood by MMOG gamers as a bigger community, most of them are confined in relevance to software systems of the games. Consider the following highlighted lexical items shown in context:

(25) Game No. 43 (recorded on September 6, 2015)

- 1 庫奇 (AD Carry) : sor
‘Sorry.’
- 2 拉克絲 (Support) : nvm 我很 lag
nvm wo hen lag
‘Never mind. I am lagging, too.’

(26) Game No. 6 (recorded on August 9, 2015)

- 1 菲歐拉 (Top) : JG 不見惹
JG bujian re
‘Our jungler disappears.’
- 2 瑪爾札哈 (Mid) : 然後了
ranhou ne
‘So?’
- 3 菲歐拉 (Top) : 他掛了哦?
ta gua le o
‘Is he not playing?’

(27) Game No. 97 (recorded on November 8, 2015)

- 1 瑟雷西 (Support) : 上路不會玩?
shanglu bu hui wan
'You do not know how to play the game, Top?'
- 2 菲歐拉 (Top) : 外掛阿
waigua a
'Cheat!'
- 3 泰達米爾 (Jungler) : ?
- 4 他怎
ta zen
'What is with him?'
- 5 菲歐拉 (Top) : 他打我超痛勿
ta da wo chao tong fu
'His damage output is crazy.'

The conversation displayed in Excerpt 25 occurs after the bottom laners AD and Support lost a trade against the enemy champions. 庫奇 interprets the stumble as owing to his own fault and apologizes to his co-laner 拉克絲 (*sor*, Line 1). However, 拉克絲 responds to make 庫奇 exempt from all the responsibilities for their loss. She tells 庫奇 not to worry about it (*nvm*, short for “never mind”) and furthermore claims part of the responsibilities for the lost fight by admitting she ran into lags while playing the game. “Lag” is a term used to describe a technical problem in online gaming; it is a delay between player commands to the server and what is visualized on the screen in reaction. Normally, the causes of lags are either insufficient processing power of players’ computers or low capabilities of the game servers. In Excerpt 26, we see another term that is universal to almost all the online game worlds; 菲歐拉 is questioning whether the team’s jungler is “hanging on the net” (*gua*, abbreviated

from *guawang*, 掛網). The term *guawang* is used by MMOGamers to refer to a player's state of absence from the avatar body. In other words, it is when the player is not controlling his/her avatar to take any actions in the virtual game world, even though other players can still see the avatar remaining still in the space. The state of *guawang* usually occurs when the player is caught up by real life emergencies or when he/she deliberately gets off line to escape the game. In Excerpt 27, *waigua* is still another common jargon that prevails among online gamers. In Line 1 瑟雷西 casts a question on whether the top laner (*shanglu*) knows how to play the game, in response to which the top laner 菲歐拉 defends herself by claiming that her rival has been cheating (*waigua*). *Waigua* is a widely known term to MMOGamers; it normally involves game code modification or bot assistance.⁵² In the case of Excerpt 27, 菲歐拉 thinks that the opposing champion is using *waigua* because she has taken much more damage than one can expect from a human-controlled avatar (Line 5). These jargons may somehow reflect that the users are not new with MMOGaming overall, even though they may be indeed newbies to *LoL*.

Besides these “technical” terms, there are jargons that could only be comprehensible to *LoL* or MOBA game players alone, not MMOGamers in general. Such slang terms were employed by totally 147 out of the 400 *LoL* players (36.75%) who came under my observation. This type of game jargons can be further categorized into two: one denoting the

⁵² “Bot” is short for “software robot,” which is designed to do automated tasks for the actual player who owns the character. With the assistance of bots, in-game characters are able to level up unbelievably fast or perform skills that are not easily grasped by real human players.

game mechanics with strategic values and one tagged along with ideologies about player behaviors while gaming. To start with, Table 4 lists all of the jargons of the former sort found in my conversational data. I furthermore divide them into respectively nouns and verbal phrases, including those describing states and actions.

Table 4
Jargons of game mechanics used by League of Legends players

Jargons	Literal Translation	Slang Meaning
<i>Nouns</i>		
<i>shuchu</i> (輸出)	output	an AD or AP carry of a team
<i>tou</i> (頭)	a head	a kill
<i>hong</i> (紅)	red	the buff gained after killing monster Red Brambleback
<i>lan</i> (藍)	blue	the buff gained after killing monster Blue Sentinel
<i>bingxian</i> (兵線)	a line that minions form	a minion wave or a distance it reaches on one of the three lanes
<i>yan</i> (眼)	an eye	a ward
<i>huizhan</i> (會戰)	a high-scale battle	a team fight
<i>qianpai</i> (前排)	the front row	champions who position themselves in the front line during team fights, usually tanks
<i>houpai</i> (後排)	the back row	champions who positions themselves at the back during team fights, usually carries
<i>bo</i> (波)	a wave	a wave of team fight
<i>houqi</i> (後期)	the later stage of time	the later stage of time in a match of game
<i>da</i> (大)	big	an ultimate ability of a

<i>shan</i> (閃)	a flash	champion the summoner spell, Flash
<i>tan</i> (坦)	a tank	the champion role, Tank
<i>damowang</i> (大魔王)	the biggest devil	the enemy champion who has become the greatest threat to a player's team, especially one that relies on a complete set of items to gain advantage

Verbal phrases

<i>zhua</i> (抓)	to catch	to take down or control the movements of enemy champions standing at the back of their team during team fights
<i>chi</i> (吃)	to eat	to defeat a neutral monster
<i>chu</i> (出)	to take out	to purchase an item
<i>B</i>	B	to go back to the base
<i>zuan</i> (賺)	to earn money	to earn gold from winning a trade with the enemy team in terms of some intermediate objectives
<i>diao</i> (掉)	to drop	to lose a turret or inhibitor to the enemy team
<i>dansha</i> (單殺)	to kill someone by oneself	to slay a champion solo
<i>nong</i> (農)	to farm	to earn gold from last hitting minions
<i>kang</i> (扛)	to carry on the shoulder	to take damage from enemy champions for allies
<i>wujie</i> (無解)	no solution	for an enemy champion to become too strong to be taken down by the player's team
<i>tui</i> (推)	to push	to make waves of minions march toward the enemy structures by killing off enemy minions

<i>chai</i> (拆)	to tear down	to destroy enemy structures
<i>bao</i> (爆)	to explode	for a structure to be destroyed
<i>miao</i> (秒)	a second	to eliminate a champion in no time
<i>tan</i> (坦)	a tank	to absorb damage dealt by enemy skill shots for allies
<i>huan</i> (換)	to change	to exchange kills with the enemy team
<i>gank</i>	gank	to attack an enemy champion by surprise, usually from behind
<i>dun</i> (蹲)	to squat	to cringe behind an ally turret to protect oneself from getting killed
<i>fang</i> (放)	to put down	to give up defending a structure
<i>zhuayang</i> (抓癢)	to scratch	not to be able to deal significant damage to a target
<i>kai</i> (開)	to open	to get into a team fight
<i>ya</i> (壓)	to press	to push a lane to force the opposing champion stay at his/her lane
<i>pian</i> (騙)	to lie	to trick an enemy champion into wasting his/her ability or summoner spell, especially one with a long cooldown ⁵³
<i>jiao</i> (交)	to hand in	to use an ability or summoner spell, especially one with a long cooldown
<i>bao</i> (保)	to protect	to protect an ally from being focused in a team fight
<i>counter</i>	to counter	for a champion to have “inborn” advantage than

⁵³ “Cooldown,” usually abbreviated as “CD,” refers to the minimum time a champion must wait until an ability or summoner spell can be activated again. Usually, those abilities or summoner spells with long cooldowns have higher values in “changing the game.”

		another in terms of his/her laning durability
<i>diu</i> (丟)	to throw	to use a skill shot
<i>na</i> (拿)	to take	to take a buff from a neutral monster
<i>rang</i> (讓)	to concede	to strategically let an ally get a kill or take a buff from a neutral monster
<i>niu</i> (扭)	to swing	to avoid being hit by a skill shot by controlling the champion's positioning skillfully
<i>dai</i> (帶)	to bring	to choose a summoner spell for a match of game
<i>shan</i> (閃)	to shine	to use a smart ping to alert an ally
<i>diaoda</i> (扁打)	to hit awesomely	to win over an enemy champion with ease
<i>gui</i> (龜)	to withdraw	to passively defend a structure
<i>fei</i> (肥)	fat	to be powered up by strong items that are earned from a great number of kills
<i>tong</i> (痛)	painful	for a champion to deal great damage to his/her opponents
<i>canxie</i> (殘血)	blood left	to be low in health
<i>shen</i> (深)	deep	to be so far into the enemy camp that the player cannot be protected by allies
<i>huijia</i> (回家)	to go back home	to go back to the home base
<i>paoxian</i> (跑線)	to run across lines	to wander to another lane to help allies fight against enemy champions
<i>shangliu</i> (上6)	to go up to 6	for a champion to achieve Level 6, thus being able to use his/her ultimate ability
<i>huanxie</i> (換血)	to trade blood	to trade health with an enemy champion

<i>chongta</i> (衝塔)	to rush into turrets	to try to kill enemy champions when going into the attack range of an enemy turret
<i>budao</i> (補刀)	to support a point of view with an additional comment	to finish up a low-health enemy champion who has been attacked by allies
<i>kaizhan</i> (開戰)	to start a war	to initiate a team fight by using a critical skill shot
<i>zouwei</i> (走位)	to position	to position oneself in order to dodge skill shots or keep a perfect distance from an enemy
<i>qingbing</i> (清兵)	to clear up minions	to eliminate minions
<i>dadeng</i> (打燈)	to give off a signal	to use a smart ping to alert an ally
<i>tasha</i> (塔殺)	to turret kill	to slay an enemy champion within the attack range of the enemy turret he/she is defending
<i>daixian</i> (帶線)	to lead a line of minions	to intercept waves of enemy minions in order to control the advance of ally minions
<i>buzhuang</i> (補裝)	to be supplied with items	to purchase the most powerful items that the player can afford
<i>daye</i> (打野)	to fight jungle	to be responsible for killing jungle monsters for gold
<i>manzhuang</i> (滿裝)	to be fully equipped	for a champion to be completely equipped with the recommended most powerful items
<i>diaojingyan</i> (掉經驗)	to lose experience	to lose experience points because the player is not in proximity to minion death

Note that some would argue that several of the listed jargons are not exclusively used in *LoL* or MOBA game chats, but can be evidently found in other MMOGs. The tricky business, however, is that these terms are widely spread because of *LoL* and other MOBA games, so the specificity I assign to the terms is a reasonable gesture to highlight their strong relationship with MOBA gamers. Now pay attention back to linguistics. Most of the jargons proposed here are neologisms that have undergone metaphorical or morphological processes alike. For example, *yan* is formed based on the metaphorical resemblance of the item to the body part, eye (眼). As discussed, wards help players clear out the fog of war nearby; to *LoL* players they indeed function like eyes, “windows to the world,” by which they can have clues to where enemies are going. The verb phrase *nong* is also an instance of metaphor; it comes out of the metaphorical mapping between the conceptual domains of *LoL* gaming and agriculture. The play of last hitting minions resembles farming because their ways of making money are both through industrious work habits and accumulation of small gains. The same metaphorical mapping is at work in the use of *nongfu* (農夫) on *LoL* forums to refer to those players who engage in last-hitting. As for word coinage that derives from morphological processes, the nominal *da* and verbal jargon *bao* are two examples. While *da* is a reduced word for the longer phrase *dajuezhao* (大絕招), *bao* is a short form for *baohu* (保護). In addition to metaphorical extension and abbreviation, there are other interesting word formation processes. To name a few, the creations of nominal jargons *hong* and *lan* are based

on metonymic relations; that is, the quality “parts” of the referents mattering most to the speaker (i.e. the types of the buffs) are used to name the “whole” Red Brambleback and Blue Sentinel monster entities. Conversion, another word formation process, comes into play in the use of the verbal phrase *tan*. Actually, *tan* is originally a noun meaning the champion role Tank (as shown in the upper part of Table 4); it afterwards comes to be used as another grammatical form – a verb – to mean what Tanks would normally do, to take damage from enemy champions. What is also worthy of mention at this point is the frequent collocations with the above-suggested jargons, yielding slang phrases in Table 5. The listed are ones employed by my informers.

Table 5
Collocate jargons of game mechanics used by League of Legends players

Jargons	Literal Translation	Slang Meaning
<i>shoujia</i> (守家)	to protect home	to protect the home base from enemy champions
<i>tui bingxian</i> (推兵線)	to push the line of minions	to eliminate enemy minions so fast that ally minions can march forward
<i>tan ta</i> (坦塔)	to tank turrets	to take damage from enemy turrets
<i>dan chi</i> (單吃)	to eat by oneself	to take down a neutral monster by the player him/herself
<i>shou tou</i> (收頭)	to collect heads	to eliminate all the low-health enemy champions that have been attacked by allies
<i>cha yan</i> (插眼)	to insert eyes	to place wards
<i>chai ta</i> (拆塔)	to tear down turrets	to destroy enemy structures

gui ta (龜塔)	to withdraw behind turrets	to passively defend a turret
kai da (開大)	to open big	to use an ultimate ability
rang tou (讓頭)	to concede heads	to strategically let an ally get a kill

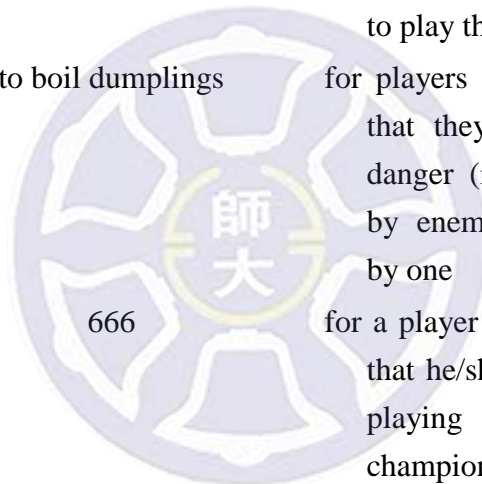
In the table, the framed words are the jargons that have been discussed before. As manifested by the data so far, the most frequent verbal construction of *LoL* jargons are verb-object phrases. In Table 4, the inseparable compounds *huijia*, *paoxian*, *shangliu*, *huanxie*, *chongta*, *budao*, *kaizhan*, *zouwei*, *qingbing*, *dadeng*, *daixian*, *buzhuang*, *daye*, and *diaojingyan* all belong to this category of constructions. Even with the rest pure verbs in Table 4 (e.g. *zhua*, *chi*, and *chu*), they should always take nominal phrases to be their objects and, when used together too often, become collocates and parts of newly arising jargon words shown in Table 5. In addition to verb-object phrases, another primary construction could possibly be prefixed subordinate verbs, that is, verbs preceded by adverbial modifiers. Examples of this kind include *dansha*, *diaoda*, and *tasha* in Table 4 and *danchi* in Table 5. Overall speaking, the use of the pithy *LoL* jargons describing game mechanics allows players to communicate with each other more efficiently for tactical purposes. When the speakers are able to locate intended referents in the virtual world within no time, the recipients could react to what happens at just the right moments. This convenience granted by the language caters perfectly to the environment of MOBA games, where speed and accuracy of movements are all one could ask for from players. Consider now the *LoL*-specific jargons oriented to ethnographic

ideologies players have about each other and the game. Table 6 lists all of the examples that could be drawn from my data.

Table 6
Jargons of player ideologies in League of Legends

Jargons	Literal Translation	Slang Meaning
<i>G</i> or <i>GG</i>	good game	to feel that the game is going to an end, usually because of a good or bad play
<i>mai</i> (賣)	to sell	for a player to make allies feel that he/she is not willing to help them in fights or taking advantage of their sacrifice to escape from danger
<i>yang</i> (養)	to feed	for a player to make allies feel that he/she keeps getting killed by enemy champions because of his/her unskillful play
20	20	to feel that the team is going to lost the game and perhaps surrender very early
<i>lei</i> (雷)	a bomb	for a player to make allies feel that he/she will be the one who drags the whole team down because he/she is unskillful
<i>songtou</i> (送頭)	to give away heads	for a player to make allies feel that he/she gets killed by enemy champions because of his/her unskillful play
<i>jiantou</i> (撿頭)	to pick up heads	for a player to make allies feel that he/she steals kills from them (i.e. to last hit on an enemy champion when

		allies have lowered most of the champion's health)
<i>dajiangyou</i> (打醬油)	to get some soybean sauce	for a player to make allies feel that he/she is not able to contribute to team fights because of the little amount of damage he/she deals to enemy champions
<i>song</i> (送)	to give away	for a player to make allies feel that he/she gets killed by enemy champions because of his/her unskillful play
<i>wujie</i> (無解)	no solution	for a player to make allies feel that he/she has no idea how to play the game at all
<i>xiashuijiao</i> (下水餃)	to boil dumplings	for players to make allies feel that they rashly head into danger (i.e. to be besieged by enemy champions) one by one
666	666	for a player to make allies feel that he/she is really good at playing a particular champion
OP	overpowered	for a player to make allies feel that he/she has done a great job in the previous play
<i>danji</i> (單機)	a single-play game	for a player to make allies feel that he/she is not a team player, only caring about his/her own business
<i>diduan</i> (低端)	the bottom end	for a player to make allies feel that he/she plays badly, just like those in low-Elo games
ATM	ATM	for a player to make allies feel that he/she plays badly, constantly gets killed by



		enemy champions, and thus awards them with a great amount of gold, like an ATM
<i>wei</i> (尾)	a tail	for a player to make allies feel that he/she steals kills from them (i.e. to last hit on an enemy champion when allies have lowered most of the champion's health)
<i>kairei</i> (凱瑞)	to carry	for a player to make allies feel that he/she is skillful enough to win over the game for them
<i>fangsheng</i> (放生)	to release	for a player to make allies feel that he/she is not willing to help them get rid of the coming danger

LoL jargons of this category are different from the ones in Table 4 and 5 in that they carry speakers' subjective implications regarding what is right or wrong in the virtual society. Perhaps because of this, they are more easily transferred to the real-life dictionary, used as alternative terms to describe real-life experience that leaves the speakers with similar feelings. One can consider the cases of *GG*, *lei*, and *OP*, all of which have been treated as mere youth slang by laymen who know nothing about their origins. Table 7 compares the meanings of the three slang words when they are used in *LoL* versus in the reality.

Table 7

Slang Meanings of GG, lei, and OP in League of Legends and real life

Jargons	Meaning in <i>LoL</i>	Meaning in Real Life
GG	to feel that the game is going to an end, usually because of a good or bad play	to feel that someone is “doomed” or “dead” in the sense of slang
<i>lei</i> (雷)	for a player to make allies feel that he/she will be the one who drags the whole team down because he/she is unskillful	for a person to make others feel that he/she is surprisingly bad at something and can drag the whole group down
OP	for a player to make allies feel that he/she has done a great job in the last play	to feel that someone or something is pretty amazing

The comparison shows that the semantic component of social evaluation and the concomitant political power of such jargons have been carried over into their slang usage in real life. What I categorize as “ideological” *LoL* jargons in here is directly related to the issue of social identity or membership in a social group as they reflect the speakers’ perceptions of and the intended social relations with the addressees. The empirical exertion of influence through the use of these jargons will be more thoroughly covered in the next section when they are discussed with speech acts during communication. Note that the verbal jargon words we have been dealing with so far might overlap with the instances of abbreviation raised in support of the morpho-syntactic identity practices. The two arguments are not so contradictory as showing the evolution of language. At first, *LoL* players would apply morphological rules of abbreviation to novel language, in need of efficiency. As time goes, the most frequently used

ones got frozen in form and entered into our mental dictionary. The English correspondences of the *LoL* jargons can also be seen as innovative idioms after language change; as shown in Section 4.1, terms like “splitpush,” “peel,” and “snowball” are now given fixed, idiosyncratic meanings that are only valid in the context of the game and must be learned by newcomers.

In Table 3, we introduce the lexical categories of Internet, MMOG, and *LoL* slang as if they were three parallel concepts. Strictly speaking, the notion of CMC should be a hypernym whose semantic field is broader than MMOG speak, which further consists of *LoL* jargons. The reason why the present study gives the same weight to all of the three is simply to highlight their respective sociolinguistic implications about *LoL* gamer identity. Apparently playing *LoL* does not necessarily entail the experience of playing other MMOGs, and playing any MMOG also does not guarantee that one engages in other online activities or uses other digital devices on a regular basis. The fact that *LoL* players employ the three categories of slang words to interact with each other matters most when it tells us that *LoL* gamer identity is ideologically linked to Internet users, MMOG players, and *LoL* players to an equal extent, just as it is to youngsters and male gangsters.

4.2.6 Typos and wrong input language

Besides shortened sentences and peculiar vocabulary, *LoL* game chat is also characterized by errors in forming the messages. This includes single-word typos and wrong

input language. Examples are given in Excerpt 28.

(28) Game No. 17 (recorded on August 23, 2015)

- 1 汎 (AD Carry) : 對面 AD 肥了妳們都不用玩
duimian AD fei le nimen dou bu yong wan
‘You cannot win the game with the enemy AD Carry so fed up.’
- 2 就不幫?
jiu bu bang
‘Not helping?’
- 3 好運姐 (AD Carry) : 2jo4u.3sl3
- 4 隊友腦
duiyou nao
‘Bad teammates.’
- 5 jg1j4cjo4t xj/6
- 6 jg 部會吃龍
jg bu hui chi long
‘Our jungler does not know how to take down Dragon.’

In response to 汎’s complaint that their teammates are not helpful, the AD Carry 好運姐 bumps into the two main problems in speech delivery. First, in Lines 3 and 5, she switches to the wrong language, English, on her keyboard when typing *duiyou nao* and *jg bu hui chi long*, sending out incomprehensible messages *2jo4u.3sl3* and *jg1j4cjo4t xj/6*. Although she does try to make a recovery by switching back to Chinese each time the mistake is found, in Line 6 she mistypes *bu* (不) into *bu* (部), a single-word typo that may as well constitute a threat to the recipients’ understanding of meaning. As such mistyping happens by accident, it can barely be taken as part of the performance of some social roles that the senders have in mind.

With this view, making a mistake in typing may not be so strong a linguistic identity practice for *LoL* players.

4.2.7 Implication for identity

According to the stereotype, online gamers, including *LoL* players, are young, socially inept males who like to stay home immersing themselves in the virtual world. This social image is perfectly spelled out by what we have found out about the use of language in the world of *LoL*, which practically shows that language may be the starting point from which the public attitudes toward its users are formed. However, as the associations between certain linguistic styles and social groups are only ideological, the evidence we have got so far do not reflect who *LoL* players really are but, importantly, how they construct their identity through collectively approving of the use of language. We could only maintain that *LoL* players as a social group seem to tacitly agree with the use of the idiosyncratic, hybrid language while interacting with each other, and this shared knowledge about how to exchange meaning in the game world could potentially help them claim their memberships in the community. To put it in the words of Bucholtz and Hall (2004, 2005), *LoL* players every now and then adopt the tactics of ADEQUATION and AUTHENTICATION to produce themselves as gamers. They are ADEQUATED in a sense that the specialized register shows their sufficient similarity to each other; using the dialect also AUTHENTICATES their gamer identity because it is the connection

with the community's history, where old-timers popularize the unique language. With this assumption, the discussed phenomenon of mistyping can be easily tolerated because everyone in the community knows about the palpable tension during gaming, which makes it hard to avoid typos sometimes. While speaking with particular linguistic structures and vocabulary in general gives way to intersubjectivity based on players' global adequation in pursuit of the gamer identity, those lexical words with evaluative connotations in particular provide us with more clues as to the social positions the community members of *LoL* have competed for. This observation will be extended to a great extent in the following section about communicative practices as another group of indexes of *LoL* gamer identity.

4.3 Communicative practices of *League of Legends* gamers

We could learn from the previous section that the heterogeneity of membership in the community of *LoL* may be revealed through players' employment of particular linguistic forms. However, with the aim to have an in-depth overview of *LoL* gamers' citizenship in the virtual community, we ought to conduct a comprehensive linguistic study, looking into not only choices of linguistic forms but also manipulation of speech acts for different communicative purposes. In other words, it is also necessary to examine how *LoL* players communicate with each other to achieve interpersonal or in-game purposes, as well as what kinds of linguistic strategies facilitate the processes. As such pragmatic analysis is part of

linguistics, the following discussion can be labeled as one of the linguistic levels of identity practices in Bucholtz's (1999) framework, just like the above-mentioned levels of morpho-syntax and lexicon. In this study, however, I assign the term communicative practice to it, in order to emphasize its equal importance with linguistic practice as a hallmark of identity work. Refer back to Chapter 3. I define *communicative practices* as engagements in communication activities, each of which may involve one or more than one speech act, or stancetaking move, that is socially meaningful to a community of practice. For the current study, I have delved into the content of my participants' in-game communication and come up with five major communicative practices of theirs: tactical reports, expressions of feelings, analyses of the current situations, appraisals of previous plays, and plans of actions. I will go into details of the five by taking a look at the alignment moves that are most frequently taken to achieve the communicative practices. One must note at this point that each discussed act of speech below may be related to particular illocutionary forces, face effects, and therefore considered to be an employment of tactics of intersubjectivity and a negotiation of membership in the community of *LoL* players.

4.3.1 Tactical reports

Tactical reports are exchanges of information that ought to be considered before one makes any operational decisions. In *LoL*, such a communicative practice involves simply

representatives. Representatives, according to Searle (1976), refer to those propositions with truth values; they represent the psychological states of the speakers that certain beliefs are true. Specifically, tactical reports are representatives of only objective facts, and of two types. One is statements that describe the speakers' findings about the enemy champions' operations; the other is those that give details about the speakers' own conditions for engagements. Since each team position or champion role has his/her duties at any point of time of the game, and there are three lanes of minions to be taken care of, basically members of the same team have to spread out to guard different areas on the map. In line with this, each player has as good chance as anybody else to collect information about enemy dispositions and movements. Also, it would be necessary for them to update allies on their conditions (e.g. their remaining health, mana, ultimate abilities and summoner spells available) before going for some in-game objectives. As tactical reports normally do not elicit responses or just expressions of acknowledgement, instead of presenting exemplary conversations, here I only list some of the tactical reports found in my data by themselves, together with their meaning and possible follow-up actions.

Table 8
Examples of tactical reports

Tactical Report	Meaning	Follow-Up Action
<i>TOP mei shan mei dianran le</i> (TOP 沒閃 沒點燃了)	The enemy top laner has just used up his summoner spells,	The jungler may help gank the enemy top laner because he/she

	Flash and Ignite.	has lost part of the ability to get away from danger.
<i>mei mo</i> (沒魔)	I don't have mana right now.	The ally may not start a fight because his/her teammate has no ability to back him/her up.
<i>you yan</i> (有眼)	There is an enemy ward sitting in the bush where you hide yourself.	The jungler may cancel the plan to gank the lane because the enemy laner could have anticipated the surprise attack.
<i>wo you r</i> (我有r)	My ultimate ability is up.	The team may consider fighting for the objective.

As explicitly shown, tactical reports are statements of facts that can be interpreted as calling for collaborative plays among players of a team. The speakers seem to take a cooperative stance and expect others to do that, too. In this respect, representatives of the kind are performed like hints, the most indirect forms of making suggestions. However, with regard to face effects, they could only be considered having potentially face-threatening effects that affect the recipients' wants to withdraw from actions originally planned. Actually, since the practice of tactical reports has become one of the responsibilities team players must fulfill, it will be weird to see it as an imposition on others' freedom to play at his/her will. Rather, tactical reports become a way of showing commonality with other members and solidifying one's position in the community, or an enactment of both ADEQUATION and

AUTHENTICATION. In other words, the speakers construct themselves within the social sameness that should characterize all of the “legitimate” *LoL* players – that they all know the importance of tactical negotiations in professional gameplays; in the meanwhile, they are demonstrating what a real *LoL* player would do to create an atmosphere of cooperation and teamwork.

4.3.2 Expressions of feelings

Another communicative practice that prevails in the game chat is expressions of feelings. To avoid being confused with the other practices discussed below, expressions of feelings should be more narrowly defined as descriptions about reflex emotions brought up at particular moments. They are expressives (Searle, 1976) that describe the speakers’ mental states only, hardly having to do with their knowledge about the game mechanics and gameplay strategies. Here are some examples taken out from the 100 matches of game chat; since expressions of feelings have more tendency to arouse responses of evaluations from the co-participants, the examples are raised in interactional context. Again, arrows “→” will be used in excerpts to help you identify the speech acts in discussion.

(29) Game No. 3 (recorded on August 7, 2015)

→ 1 薩科 (Jungle) : 幹
gan
'Fuck.'

→ 2 你媽針對我
nima zhendui wo
‘Motherfucker. The enemies are totally directed against me.’

(30) Game No. 28 (recorded on August 15, 2015)

1 飛斯 (敵人) 正在大殺特殺!

feisi zhengzai dashatesha

‘Enemy Fizz is on a killing spree!’

2 飛斯 (敵人) 擊殺葛雷夫完成雙殺!

feisi jisha geleifu wancheng shuangsha

‘Enemy Fizz has slain Graves for a double kill!’

→ 3 飛斯 (Support) : @@

→ 4 葛雷夫 (AD Carry) : @@

→ 5 飛斯 (Support) : QQ

‘(Crying).’

(31) Game No. 37 (recorded on September 6, 2015)

1 李星 (敵人) 正在大殺特殺!

lixing zhengzai dashatesha

‘Enemy Lee Sin is on a killing spree!’

→ 2 蒙多醫生 (Support) : ==

→ 3 好運姐 (AD Carry) : ==

(32) Game No. 48 (recorded on September 13, 2015)

1 賈克斯 (敵人) 獲得首殺!

jiakesi huode shousha

‘Enemy Jax has drawn first blood!’

→ 2 易大師 (Jungle) :

→ 3 提摩 (Top) : ...

→ 4 易大師 (Jungle) : ...

(33) Game No. 62 (October 4, 2015)

1 李星 (敵人) 正在大殺特殺!

lixing zhengzai dashatesha

- ‘Enemy Lee Sin is on a killing spree!’
- 2 好運姐 (AD Carry) : 各種痛
gezhong tong
‘The skill shots of the enemy champions cause a lot of pain.’

(34) Game No. 66 (October 10, 2015)

- 1 狻宿終結了吉茵珂絲 (敵人) 的三連殺!
yasu zhongjie le jiyinkesi de san liansha
‘Yasuo has ended Enemy Jinx’s killing spree!’
- 2 崔絲塔娜標記了維克特 (敵人)
cuisitana biaoji le weikete
‘Tristana has targeted Enemy Viktor.’
- 3 狻宿終結了維克特 (敵人) 的四連殺!
yasu zhongjie le weikete de si liansha
‘Yasuo has ended Enemy Viktor’s killing spree!’
- 4 崔絲塔娜 (AD Carry) : 1v4
- 5 索拉卡 (Support) : .
- 6 wtf
‘What the hell is going on?’
- 7 狻宿 (Mid) : XD

(35) Game No. 67 (recorded on October 11, 2015)

- 1 李星 (敵人) 正在大殺特殺!
lixing zhengzai dashatesha
‘Enemy Lee Sin is on a killing spree!’
- 2 李星 (Support) : GG
‘We are going to lose the game.’
- 3 李星 (敵人) 已經暴走了!
lixing yijing baozou le
‘Enemy Lee Sin is on a rampage!’
- 4 李星 (Support) : ><
- 5 崔絲塔娜終結了李星 (敵人) 的連殺紀錄!
cuisitana zhongjie le lixing de liansha jilu
‘Tristana has ended Enemy Lee Sin’s killing spree!’
- 6 李星 (Support) : 哈哈
haha

- 7 趙信 (Jungle) : (Laughing).
--
- (36) Game No. 79 (recorded on October 18, 2015)
- 1 布朗姆 (Support) : 那 Q
na Q
'That Q.'
- 2 拉克絲 (Mid) : wwwww
'(Laughing).'
- 3 布朗姆 (Support) : 哈哈
hahaha
'(Laughing).'
- 4 拉克絲 (Mid) : 笑死 www
xiao si
'I almost laughed myself to death.'
- 5 布朗姆 (Mid) : 你根本沒紐阿
ni genben mei niu a
'You did not even try to dodge it.'
- 6 哈哈阿
hahaha a
'(Laughing).'
- 7 法洛士 (AD Carry) : XD
- 8 拉克絲 (Mid) : 對鋼 xD
dui a
'Yes.'

These situations are when *LoL* players project their real-life feelings through the “mouths” of their controlled avatars, the use of character keys to symbolize what they feel as a result of something happening in the game. The combinations of character keys in use may include quasi-nonverbal cues (e.g. *0.0*, *@@*, *QQ*, *= =*, ..., *XD*, *><*, *haha*, *--*, *www*), taboo words (e.g. *gan*, *nima*, *wtf*), and even game jargons (e.g. *tong*) that imply the speakers’ emotional states.

(Refer back to Section 4.2 to check how these sets of vocabulary have to do with feelings that one experience.) Player emotions displayed on the messaging channel could be very complicated as we see there are reactions of anger (Excerpt 29), surprise (Excerpt 30), speechlessness (Excerpts 31 and 32), ecstasy (Excerpt 34), etc. One important point to note is that an expression of feeling in the *LoL* chat console could easily invoke similar reactions on the part of other players who also experience a particular situation. As Excerpts 30, 31, and 32 show, the facts that the enemies get kills have incurred the team members' displeasure, which are all in the form of collaborative invocation of quasi-nonverbal cues, sent out by more than one player. It is also worth mentioning that the expressives sometimes go hand in hand with representatives that depict the events of concern. For example, in Excerpts 29, 34, and 36, 薩科, 崔絲塔娜, and 布朗姆 state respectively what has just happened while (others) expressing their feelings toward it. 薩科 is angry at the fact that he is targeted (*zhendui*) by the enemy team in the team fight; 崔絲塔娜 highlights the 1 versus 4 play of 狻宿 that her allies find amazing; 布朗姆 points out the hilarious moment when 拉克絲 dodges an enemy skill shot without even trying to turn away (*niu*, 扭, typed wrong as 紐) from it.

Just like the representatives performed for tactical reports, expressions of feelings could be analyzed as indirect hints. That is, there might be some intentions of the speakers hidden in those messages. Take Excerpt 33 as an example. The fact that 好運姐 feels that the

enemy champions have been dealing too much damage (*tong*) could leave her allies a sense of guilt because enemies' high attack and ability damage is usually gained from allies' being slain or incapable of achieving in-game objectives. From this perspective, expressions of feelings potentially have face-threatening effects of reducing some recipients' face needs of not being pushed to remedy particular situations. The last point to make here is still how this communicative practice can be treated as stancetaking moves and further related to the tactics of intersubjectivity. By expression of feelings, the speakers are taking emotive stances of being either aggressive (when using offensive language like *gan* and *nima*) or only suggestive. In both cases, their expressives show vividly that the speakers are trying to intervene in the situations through the chat channel, even though things could hardly change because of the expressions. Similar to tactical reports, the use of the expressives activates ADEQUATION and AUTHENTICATION simultaneously. In this case, the *LoL* players seek to associate with each other with the shared knowledge of the valid forms of communication and the timings when the acts of speech could convey the greatest illocutionary forces in the game world; in the meantime, the display of the exact knowledge of the emotive vocabulary verifies these speakers' claims to *LoL* gamer identities, which are Internet users and modern people in the twenty-first century, just as the respected *LoL* players are in professional or high-Elo plays. In addition to this view on the intersubjectivity among the players, it is also interesting to note that the collaborative invocation of quasi-nonverbal cues we discussed earlier is an enactment

of ADEQUATION as well. It shows that the *LoL* players who repeat others' emotive stances are inclined to echo with some socially approved community members in terms of their likes and dislikes on gaming experience.

4.3.3 Analyses of the current situations

Analyses of the current situations are statements of opinions about what is going on at a particular moment of a game. They are usually made after the speakers give thoughts to the status and outlook for the team's champion matchups, the players' gaming skills and teamwork. In linguistic terms, this communicative practice is carried out by representatives, not of emotional states but of rational beliefs. Similar to tactical reports, analyses of the current situations are intended for information transmission. Nonetheless, tactical reports are transmission of facts while analyses of the current situations are transmission of one's ideas, mostly predictions. Table 9 lists some of the examples from my data; let's first take a look at these subjective descriptives as they are single turns of talk, not followed by any responses from other participants.

Table 9
Examples of analyses of the current situations (single turns)

Analysis of the Current Situation	Meaning
<i>20</i>	We will have to surrender very soon because of all the losing fights.
<i>GG</i>	The game will end pretty soon.

<p><i>hen nan da</i> (很難打)</p> <p><i>hui zhan ying gai hui ying</i> (會戰應該會贏)</p> <p><i>nong dao hou mian hui shu</i> (農到後面會輸)</p> <p><i>zhong shang beng pan</i> (中上崩盤)</p> <p><i>zhong lu yi bo jiu jie shu le ba</i> (中路一波就結束了吧)</p> <p><i>shang lu jiu bu liao a</i> (上路救不了啊)</p> <p><i>shang tai fei</i> (上大肥)</p> <p><i>zhe yang xia qu bu yong da la</i> (這樣下去不用打啦)</p>	<p>It is very unlikely for our champion matchups to fight against the enemies.</p> <p>Our champion matchups are good at team fights.</p> <p>We will lose the game if it lasts till the late phase when everyone almost maxes out his/her level.</p> <p>We are losing the mid and top lanes.</p> <p>We will win the game after pushing the mid lane for the last time.</p> <p>The structures at the top lane are no longer safe.</p> <p>The enemy top laner has become so powerful in his abilities that he/she may become a huge threat in the end.</p> <p>We will lose the game if we keep losing team fights.</p>
---	---

As shown, representatives in this use are clearly displays of the speakers' knowledge about *LoL*, or to be more specifically, their understanding of the in-game objectives at each phase of a game. As membership in the community of *LoL* players is mostly defined by what they know about *LoL* (see Section 4.1), analyses of the current situations could easily be taken as exertion of social power. That is, by such an act of the type of speech the speaker adopts a knower or analyst stance and enacts AUTHENTICATION of his/her identity in the community. The social actor historicizes his/her own gamer identity through claims of continuity with past experience of playing the game; only experienced or professional *LoL* players have the ability to analyze the in-game situations. It is interesting to note that, unlike tactical reports

and expressions of feelings the two communicative practices that barely get responses if not agreement markers, analyses of the current situations have more tendencies to spark off discussion, sometimes even arguments. Let's now refer back to the act of speech *huizhan yinggai hui ying* in Table 9, but this time present in the middle of exchanges of talk among the participants.

(37) Game No. 26 (recorded on August 23, 2015)

- 1 維克特 (Mid) : 加油吧 會戰應該會贏
jiayou ba huizhan yinggai hui ying
 'Keep it up. We are supposed to be better than the enemies at team fights.'
- 2 亞歷斯塔 (Top) : 那你加油吧
na ni jiayou ba
 'Then you should keep it up.'
- 3 維克特 (Mid) : --

In this excerpt, at the team's inferiority, 維克特 remains optimistic that his team will have the advantage in up-coming team fights (Line 1), given their champion matchups. Little does he know that the top laner 亞歷斯塔 does not believe in this conjecture and throws a cold response in his face – *na ni jiayou ba*. 亞歷斯塔's reply shows his disagreement with 維克特 in terms of their team's situation at the moment. Instead of living in hope, 亞歷斯塔 anticipates that they are going to lose the game and thus asks 維克特 to hang in there by himself. In such an interaction of opinions, stancetaking in the social context of *LoL* gamer community is especially patent because it involves negotiation of power and social

relationships among more than one person. The original stance claim made by 維克特 is undermined by 亞歷斯塔's uptake. That is, 亞歷斯塔 seems to take a completely different knower stance toward the result of the game; he knows that 維克特's prediction will never come true. Using the terms of the tactics of intersubjectivity framework, one could say 亞歷斯塔 disagrees with the identity relation of AUTHENTICATION that 維克特 established before, not believing that 維克特's analysis of the current situation could help him convince others of his gamer identity.

Since analyses of the current situations implicate not just the speakers' subjectivity but also their intentions, of persuading others to believe in something, etc., the notion of face may be relevant and useful here. Based on my observation, the face effects of such representatives can be subcategorized into two. Both of them involve damage to some recipients' face wants, but while one is about how to sound polite, the other is intended for impoliteness. The former is when an analysis of an in-game situation is interpreted as an indirect suggestion.⁵⁴ The example in Excerpt 37 above belongs to this category. A possible overtone of 維克特's assertion in Line 1 is a suggestion that the team keep the hope up and fight to the end because their champions could perform better in team fights. This implication of the utterance causes damage to his allies' face by creating pressure on them not to surrender the game and get ready for late-game team fights. Other examples of the type of representatives include *nong*

⁵⁴ The reason why analyses of the current situations can be indirect suggestions but not just hints like tactical reports and expressions of feelings is that their propositional contexts are far more explicit as to revealing what the speakers are thinking.

dao houmian hui shu and *zhonglu yibo jiu jieshu le ba* in Table 9. Table 10 displays their implied suggestions.

Table 10

The implied suggestions of the analyses of the current situations in Games No. 29 and 58

Analysis of the Current Situation	Implied Suggestion
<i>nong dao houmian hui shu</i> (農到後面會輸)	I suggest that we end the game as soon as possible by initiating team fights and aggressively pushing enemy structures.
<i>zhonglu yibo jiu jieshu le ba</i> (中路一波就結束了吧)	I suggest that we all gather in the mid lane to push enemy structures together because this is the most efficient way to win the game.

Both *nong dao houmian hui shu* and *zhonglu yibo jiu jieshu le ba* intrude on the face of each of the rest teammates, their face wants of not being forced to do anything. A different face effect that can be achieved by analyses of in-game situations is generated by off-record impoliteness. An exemplary act of speech is given below.

(38) Game No. 62 (recorded on October 4, 2015)

- 1 好運姐 (AD Carry) : 安妮好肥
anni hao fei
'Enemy Annie is so fed up.'
- 2 卡力斯 (Jungle) : 這不能怪誰
zhe bu neng guai shei
'We should not blame anyone for this.'
- 3 好好打吧
haohao da ba

4		‘Just try your best to play well.’ 加油 <i>jiayou</i> ‘Keep it up.’
5	蓋倫 (Top) :	SOR ‘Sorry.’
6		我得問題 <i>wo de wenti</i> ‘The problem is on me.’
7	好運姐 (AD) :	沒關 C <i>mei guan C</i> ‘Don’t worry.’
8		還是打得過 <i>haishi da de guo</i> ‘We can still manage to win the game.’

In this conversation, 好運姐 makes an assertion that the enemy 安妮 is well fed by all the kills she picked up, in response to which 卡力斯 redirects 好運姐’s negativity to a “mature” point of view that no individual player should be blamed for an enemy’s being built up because *LoL* is a game of teamwork. From this exchange of talk we can infer that the representative *anni hao fei* is originally meant to perform impoliteness, or 卡力斯 would not have smoothed things over between his teammates. That is, it could be seen as an act of complaint that aims to damage the face of whoever responsible for laning against the enemy 安妮. This intended face effect is clearer when we further consider 蓋倫’s follow-up apology about 安妮. Only when 好運姐’s statement is treated as an act of impoliteness or attack can 蓋倫’s self-effacement be explained. Other instances of the category include 20, *zhong shang bengpan*, *shanglu jiu bu liao a*, *shang tai fei*, and *zheyang xia qu bu yong da la* in Table 9.

Table 11 presents their possible meanings of attacking certain allies.

Table 11

The possible meanings of the analyses of the current situations in Games No. 14, 32, 63, 69, and 92 as acts of impoliteness

Analysis of the Current Situation	Act of Impoliteness
20	The allies have played so bad that the team can surrender the game as early as possible.
<i>zhong shang bengpan</i> (中上崩盤)	The mid and top laners of our team have played so bad that their lanes are losing.
<i>shang lu jiu bu liao a</i> (上路救不了啊)	The top laner has played so bad that the top turrets are no longer safe anymore.
<i>shang tai fei</i> (上大肥)	The top laner of our team has played so bad that the enemy top laner has gained a lot of power.
<i>zheyang xia qu bu yong da la</i> (這樣下去不用打啦)	The allies have played so bad that there is no way we can win the game.

Taken as language of offense, these representatives are performed to insult particular allies to their faces. However, because the speakers' intention is opaque, this type of analyses of the current situations can be said to use off-record impoliteness strategies, instead of bald-on-record ones. Plus, the tactic of DE-AUTHENTICATION is potentially involved here as the speakers' analyses of the current situations DE-AUTHENTICATE some allies' formerly authentic gamer identities. The allies have been playing like pros until they make people think that their bad gameplay skills result in the teams' inferiority.

4.3.4 Appraisals of previous plays

Appraisals of previous plays are comments about how well certain players perform in earlier engagements or some decisions they make that lead to great repercussions in the game. To put it in a more specific way, this communicative practice may be targeted on a player's skills at or knowledge about playing particular champions, item builds, the use of abilities, resource distribution, map awareness, objective priority, warding, laning, etc. Appraisals of previous plays are mostly in the linguistic form of, again, representatives, of someone's points of view. They could easily be associated with face work because they are subjective descriptives directed to plays of some target allies. In accordance with the emotions they are tagged along with, there are mainly two kinds of appraisals of the previous plays: positive and negative. I will first deal with positive appraisals in terms of their relationship with *LoL* gamer identity. The following are some examples to be considered before we get into deeper discussion.

(39) Game No. 8 (Recorded on August 15, 2015)

1 達瑞斯擊殺飛斯（敵人）完成雙殺！

dareisi jisha feisi wancheng shuangsha

'Darius has slain Enemy Fizz for a double kill!'

2 達瑞斯擊殺瑟雷西（敵人）完成三連殺！

dareisi jisha seleixi wancheng san liansha

'Darius has slain Enemy Thresh for a triple kill!'

3 我軍消滅敵隊！

wojun xiaomie didui

'Ally team has scored an ace!'

→ 4 飛斯 (Support) : 好猛阿

hao meng a

- 5 艾克 (Mid) : 'You are fierce!'
 太強
tai qiang
 'Too strong.'

After 達瑞斯 achieves three kills in a row and “aces” the enemy team (Lines 2 and 3), his teammates 飛斯 and 艾克 respond to the play by calling it *meng* and *qiang*, both of which denote the quality of being strong and powerful. As a speech act like these meets the addressee’s face goods by improving his/her social image in the community, it should be considered a positive comment or compliment. It seems that the speakers of such positive appraisals are willing to express their likes and perhaps develop a positive ambience within the group, taking a supportive, encouraging stance toward other participants in the community. In the voice of Bucholtz and Hall (2004, 2005), such positive appraisals provide the addressees with AUTHENTICATION of their gamer identities because their former claims to the identities through the gameplays are now validated or acknowledged by literate others.

Now consider one more example of positive appraisal.

(40) Game No. 21 (recorded on August 23, 2015)

- 1 蓋倫已經無人能擋！
gailun yijing wurenngdang
 ‘Garen is unstoppable!’
- 2 艾克 (Jungle) : nice~~~~~
- 3 伊澤瑞爾 (AD Carry) : 蓋倫肥囉
gailun fei luo
 ‘Garen is very powerful right now.’

There is a common point between Excerpts 39 and 40 with regard to the allies’ responses to particular players’ great plays. In Excerpt 40, 蓋倫’s “unstoppable” (*wu ren neng dang*) killing streak arouses compliments from not just one co-player, which is similar to the case in Excerpt 39. The point here to make is that appraisals of previous plays, like expressions of feelings, may be characterized by *LoL* players’ following each other to engage in the same communicative practice. A possible reason for this is that echoing with each other by repeating similar comments is one of the easiest ways to take a responsive stance during gameplays, given the prevalent, easily-typed slang words that could independently serve as remarks giving opinions, including *meng* and *qiang* in Excerpt 39 and *zan* in Excerpt 40. In many of the undiscussed game chats, *gd* and *shui* (水)⁵⁵ are also lexical items that can be seen as representatives of positive appraisals on their own. Such echoes of compliments establish the identity relation of ADEQUATION among *LoL* players; they are meant to make sure that everybody is on the same page of what a good play is like. This identity work can be supported by 伊澤瑞爾’s turn in Line 3. Before he praises 蓋倫 for the achievement, he explains why it is worth celebrating – that the top laner 蓋倫 has become strong enough to

⁵⁵ *Shui* is a long-standing slang word used to describe something beautiful or awesome. It is a Taiwanese loanword in Mandarin Chinese; the phonetic value of *shui* is similar to that of the Taiwanese morpheme meaning “beautiful.”

“carry” the game. This explanation or analysis of the current situation shows that 伊澤瑞爾’s collaborative invocation of the appraisal is not just for building interpersonal relationship with his teammates but also for ADEQUATING his gamer identity with others. 伊澤瑞爾 attempts to claim that he has similar knowledge of the characteristics of the champion 蓋倫, the role he plays in a team, and thus what will happen if he gets “fat.”

Let’s now turn to negative appraisals. The negative appraisals under my collection are a way of expressing displeasure as a result of a player’s bad move. The following lists several examples of the type of communicative practices in my conversational data, each of which has something to say about the negotiation of *LoL* gamer identity.

(41) Game No. 52 (recorded on September 20, 2015)

- 1 達瑞斯 (Top) : 這節奏是要下水餃的意思...
zhe jiezou shi yao xiashuijiao de yisi
 ‘Are we all going to get killed separately?’
- 2 納帝魯斯 (Support) : 對==
dui
 ‘Yes.’
- 3 我前面沒打好 sorry
wo qianmian mei da hao sorry
 ‘I did not play well before. Sorry.’
- 4 達瑞斯 (Top) : 我覺得是 AD 的問題
wo jue de shi AD de wenti
 ‘I think the problem is on our AD Carry.’
- 5 他的裝備就有問題了==
ta de zhuangbei jiu you wenti le
 ‘There is obviously a problem with her build.’
- 6 納帝魯斯 (Support) : 他是滿有問題的
ta shi man you wenti de

- 7 雷珂煞 (Jungle) : ‘It is true that she is quite a problem.’
中路也不差壓
zhonglu ye bu cha ya
‘Our mid laner did not play well either.’

The interaction starts with 達瑞斯’s negative appraisal about his teammates’ earlier behavior – taking turns dying to the enemy champions with no clear thoughts of how to fight as a team (*xia shuijiao*). In Line 4, 達瑞斯 further calls out the player (*AD*), who he thinks is the troublemaker. These expressions of annoyance or complaint are clearly acts of impoliteness that threaten the addressees’ face wants to be desirable in front of others. With regard to the degrees of impoliteness, the representatives in Lines 4 and 5 seem to be more threatening than Line 1 since they not only indicate that something is going wrong but also hold someone responsible for the team’s downfall. During his venting, 達瑞斯 has been taking an arrogant and condescending stance toward other members in the team. In the terms of the tactics of intersubjectivity, he resorts to the tactic of DEAUTHENTICATION by directing it to the addressees’ gamer identities or membership roles in the community. That is to say, the addressees’ believed to be authentic gamer identities, which are based on their participation in other rudimentary *LoL* practices such as distribution of team positions and early game laning, are now challenged and DEAUTHENTICATED. Now focus on others’ uptakes of 達瑞斯’s negative appraisals in Excerpt 41. In reaction to the first complaint in Line 1, 納帝魯斯 uses the agreement particle *dui* to display his shared stance with 達瑞斯

(Line 2). In Line 6, he once again responds to 達瑞斯's criticism with agreement, but this time making a similar comment with a full sentence (*ta shi man you wenti de*). By these utterances, 納帝魯斯 deploys the identity relation of ADEQUATION to socio-psychologically form a clique with 達瑞斯. Another team member, 雷珂煞, also enacts ADEQUATION through engaging in the same practice of negative appraisals to call out another problem maker (i.e. *zhonglu*). The collaborative invocation of one particular communicative practice, again, is a way to manifest the participants' collective gamer identity; these negative appraisal makers proactively show their shared knowledge about what constitutes bad plays in the *LoL* game world. The joint activity of seeking out a scapegoat has become part of the culture of the *LoL* gamer community, typically called *jiu zhanfan* (揪戰犯). One more thing to note in here is the act of apology performed by 納帝魯斯 in Line 3, which in this match of game serves as a response to 達瑞斯's negative appraisal in Line 1 and also initiates the following group complaint. Such an expressive of apology is self-effacing because the speaker damages his/her own face by admitting that he/she should not have done something bad. In this case, 納帝魯斯 employs the apology indicating device *sorry* to acknowledge his part of responsibility for the bad in-game situation. With the apology, 納帝魯斯 tacitly agrees with the former accusation that the team has become out of sync, and he might be the cause of it. This self-blaming stance alludes to the tactic of DEAUTHENTICATION against 納帝魯斯 himself in that his formerly authentic gamer identity, as constructed through previous

practices according to the community's code of conduct, is put into question.

In the following excerpts, I will present three other examples from my conversational data, all of which involve typical components of negative appraisals and co-participants' evaluations of their social meaning. They exemplify some important ways of negotiation of *LoL* gamer identity among the players.

(42) Game No. 4 (recorded on August 8, 2015)

- 1 菲歐拉 (Top) : 還在吃也
haizai chi ye
'Still killing jungle monsters.'
- 2 馬`的
made
'What the hell.'
- 3 吉茵珂絲發出訊號告知隊友正在路上
jiyinkesi fa chu xunhao gaozhi duiyou zheng zailushang
'Jinx is on the way.'
- 4 菲歐拉 (Top) : 腦殘•?
naocan
'Moron?'
- 5 吉茵珂絲 (AD Carry) : ao65j4u4214= =
6 沒注意到
mei zhuyi dao
'I did not notice it.'
- 7 我腦南
wo naonan
'I am a moron,'
- 8 好嗎
hao ma
'okay?'
- 9 菲歐拉 (Top) : 我都打幾個燈了
wo dou da ji ge deng le
'How many times have I pinged?'

Similar to Excerpt 41, the interaction shown here is triggered by some unpleasant gaming experience. In Line 1, 菲歐拉 uses the sentence structure governed by *hai zai* to express her dissatisfaction with 吉茵珂絲's behavior just now – 吉茵珂絲 is not helping the rest to fight for the group's collective profit, the Baron buff; instead, she has been busy killing jungle monsters (*chi ye*, 吃野, mistyped as 吃也) for her own earnings. This first utterance establishes the context for the upcoming offensive speech, curse words *ma de* (mistyped as 馬的) and an insulting name *naocan*. They together form a set of face-threatening acts that play out the tactic of DEAUTHENTICATION as the negative appraisals do in Excerpt 41. In Line 5, 吉茵珂絲 finally takes over the floor to make response to 菲歐拉's attack. However, in her haste to reply to 菲歐拉, 吉茵珂絲 forgets to switch the keyboard to Chinese and types out a sequence of nonsense (*ao65j4u42l4*). She resends the message in Line 6, providing a reason why she was late for the fight – because she did not notice that the fight was going off. By saying so, 吉茵珂絲 is trying to redress her face need, and more importantly, take a defensive stance to maintain her social position in the community. In Line 7, 吉茵珂絲 repeats the negative assessment 菲歐拉 has made of her as a *naocan*, which is, again, an act of DEAUTHENTICATION against herself like an act of apology, only with a self-face threatening effect achieving even a greater level.

Excerpt 43 below involves still another instance of negative appraisal.

(43) Game No. 41 (recorded on September 6, 2015)

- 1 雷玟發出訊號告知所有人敵人消失
leiwen fa chu xunhao gaozhi suoyouren diren xiaoshi
‘Riven signals that enemies are missing.’
- 2 雷玟發出訊號告知所有人敵人消失
leiwen fa chu xunhao gaozhi suoyouren diren xiaoshi
‘Riven signals that enemies are missing.’
- 3 雷玟發出訊號告知所有人敵人消失
leiwen fa chu xunhao gaozhi suoyouren diren xiaoshi
‘Riven signals that enemies are missing.’
- 4 雷玟 (Top) : 神看戲
shen kanxi
‘You just stood there watching.’
- 5 可以投了
keyi tou le
‘We can surrender now.’
- 6 垃圾打野
lese daye
‘Our jungler is garbage.’
- 7 0/4/0
‘So far he has not engaged in any kills for our team and been killed for four times himself.’
- 8 0Gank
‘No gank.’
- 9 垃圾
lese
‘Garbage.’
- 10 雷珂煞 (Jungle) : 那可真不好意思齣
na ke zhen bu hao yisi hou
‘I am pretty sorry then.’
- 11 TOP 能玩這樣
TOP neng wan zheyang
‘I have never seen a top laner playing this bad.’

The setting for this conversation is a team fight that happened at mid game, where the jungler

雷珂煞 did not contribute to the fight as expected by the top laner 雷玟. 雷玟 in Lines 1-3

conveys her annoyance at 雷珂煞's passiveness through three alert pings. Although the default function for the smart ping is to signal enemies missing, it is frequently used by players to call into question what particular allies did in previous play, as its emission accompanies sharp noises and flashing question marks on the minimap.⁵⁶ In Lines 4-9, 雷玟 follows with a series of negative comments, including the accusations that 雷珂煞 stood there and did nothing (*kanxi*) during the team fight and that he has not played the jungler position well throughout the whole game. 雷玟 gives two pieces of evidence to show 雷珂煞's incapability as a *LoL* player, his kill/death/assist score till the moment of the game (0/4/0) and how many times he has ganked for his teammates (*OGank*). These face-threatening acts are intermingled with an analysis of the current situation – suggestion of surrender (*keyi tou[xiang] le*) – and the practice of name calling (*lese*), all of which contribute to the sense of DEAUTHENTICATION directed against 雷珂煞's gamer identity. In reply to 雷玟's reproach, 雷珂煞 first excuses himself for his imprudence (*zhen bu hao yisi*), which appears to be a self-derogatory act and an expression of politeness. However, 雷珂煞's follow-up counterattack (Line 11) proves this interpretation wrong. His ostensible apology act is

⁵⁶ Below is a minimap that shows the question mark popping up when the Enemy Missing ping is used:



actually “a trace of irony” that goes with the next line *TOP neng wan cheng zheyang*, also a representative intended for negative appraisal. Irony such a mock politeness act (Culpeper, 1996) is actually an enactment of DENATURALIZATION owing to the fact that it creates dissonance within the speaker’s self-presentation in terms of the ambivalent stances he/she takes toward particular subjects. In this case, the dissonance is found between 雷珂煞’s self-effacing and accusatory stances about the previous play. With both of the off-record impoliteness act irony and bald-on-record accusation, 雷珂煞 aims to damage 雷玟’s face wants of not being disagreed and discredited. In other words, he takes an accusatory stance to redirect the responsibility for the lost team fight onto 雷玟, DE-AUTHENTICATING 雷玟’s gamer identity formerly suggested by her negative appraisal against 雷珂煞. Moreover, the identity relation of DISTINCTION naturally emerges from 雷玟 and 雷珂煞’s opposing stances over the dispute. The two players both try to construct a social difference from each other with regard to the centrality of membership; to be more specific, they make efforts to push one another to a peripheral position in the *LoL* gamer community.

Let’s consider one more example of negative appraisals in *LoL* game chat.

(44) Game No. 58 (recorded on September 25, 2015)

- 1 狻宿 (Mid) : 你白癡嗎
ni baichi ma
‘Are you an idiot,’
- 2 JG
‘Jungle?’

- 3 你這樣開大的 ****
ni zheyang kaida de
 ‘You use your ultimate ability like this.’
- 4 阿姆姆 (Jungle) : ==失誤一次需要罵人嗎
shiwu yi ci xuyao maren ma
 ‘Do you really have to blame me for making a single mistake?’
- 5 你沒失誤過?
ni mei shiwu guo
 ‘Don’t you ever make a mistake?’
- 6 飛斯 (Top) : 我剛失誤
wo gang shiwu
 ‘I just made a mistake.’
- 7 哈哈
haha
 ‘(Laughing).’
- 8 牙素梅納麼針對人
yasu mei namo zhendui ren
 ‘Yasuo, don’t be this personal in your remarks.’
- 9 別
bie
 ‘Don’t.’
- 10 遊戲
youxi
 ‘It is just,’
- 11 而已.
eryi
 ‘A game.’

The blasting fuse for the argument in Excerpt 44 is a mid-game team fight where a teammate failed to use his ultimate ability (*da*, short for *dajuezhao*, 大絕招) properly. 狻宿 initiates his negative appraisal with a rhetoric question intended for calling a ratified hearer an idiot. He then indicates the addressed person (i.e. *JG*) and the source of his annoyance in the following line. The asterisks **** in Line 3 are censored curse words that were meant to

support 狻猊's accusatory stance. Just like the commenters in the above exemplars, 狻猊 intimates the identity relation of DEAUTHENTICATION against the addressee. Interestingly, in return to 狻猊's complaint, the jungler 阿姆姆 does not excuse or defend himself to make a big deal out of his failed play; rather, he challenges 狻猊's negative appraisal as if it is an illegitimate communicative practice in the game, suggesting that it is unnecessary to insult a player who has only made one mistake (Line 4). 阿姆姆 further questions 狻猊 if his play has always been impeccable (Line 5). The two lines of retort function in tandem to create the identity relation of DISTINCTION between the social positions of 狻猊 and 阿姆姆 in terms of their respective gameplay philosophies, particularly about degrees of toleration for failed plays. That is, 狻猊 and 阿姆姆 deny each other's identity as a core member in the community. What is also worth mentioning is that the communicative practice of negative appraisal here provokes responses from more than one co-player. 飛斯's turn from Line 6 still concerns the topic raised by 狻猊. With his self-experience sharing, that he just made a mistake when playing his champion (Line 6), warning against making personal attacks while playing the game (Line 8), and statement of the obvious that they all are engaging in a leisure activity of gaming (Lines 10-11, *youxi eryi*), 飛斯 displays an endorsement of 阿姆姆's stance; or say, he deploys the intersubjective tactic of ADEQUATION to build a harmonious interpersonal relationship with 阿姆姆. On some level, 飛斯's metacognitive identification of people's opinions about what a game is supposed to be – that it is nothing serious – is a

deployment of ILLEGITIMATION in that it provides 飛斯 with the ideological power to ILLEGITIMATE 狻宿's identity as a player who tends to blame teammates for playing the game wrong.

To sum up, negative appraisals post in the *LoL* chat window can be made through plenty of linguistic strategies, or, to put it another way, they may have different components. The most frequently used strategies or components are indicators of problems or justifications for criticisms (e.g. *xia shuijiao, ta de zhuangbei jiu you wenti le, hai zai chiye, shen kanxi, 0/4/0, 0Gank, ni zheyang kai da de*), cursing (e.g. *made*), and name-calling (e.g. *naocan, lese, baichi*). As for the uptakes of this communicative practice, it is possible that the addressees excuse themselves for doing something wrong, try to reason for the misconduct, or talk back.

4.3.5 Plans of actions

Plans of actions are clear suggestions for future actions. Based on the conversations among my informers, plans of actions are obligatives that can indeed be subdivided into two ways: commissives and directives. As proposed by Searle (1976), commissives are the suggestions that certain actions will be taken by the speakers in the future, or in this case, later in the game; on the other hand, directives provoke some actions from the addressees. These two, in the context of *LoL* game chat, are usually performed during coordination of missions or plans for the next engagements. To start with, Table 12 lists some exemplary uses of commissives

found in my data.

Table 12

Examples of commissives as plans of actions in League of Legends game chat

Commissives as Plans of Actions	Meaning
<i>wo xian hui mashang xia qu</i> (我先回 馬上下去)	I will go help you at the bottom lane after recalling back to the home base.
<i>wo zhuo ad</i> (我捉 ad)	I will catch the enemy AD Carry in the team fight.
<i>xialu duo cha yan wo keneng hui bang</i> (下路多插眼我可能會幫)	I may assist the bottom lane if the laners put more wards down.
<i>xian gui deng qu</i> (先龜 等去)	I will help you later, so don't play too aggressively for now.
<i>wo lai chayan</i> (我來插眼)	Let me place wards to gain more vision.
<i>zhong gei wo lai</i> (中給我來)	I will cover the mid lane.
<i>wo yao nusha le</i> (我要怒殺了)	I will start to play aggressively and kill them all.
<i>wo kai hong</i> (我開紅)	I will start off the game by taking the red buff.
<i>da yibo wo kongchang</i> (打一波 我控場)	Let's initiate a team fight. I will use my crowd control ability to control the enemies' movements.
<i>wo qu daishian</i> (我去帶線)	I will go lead the lane and eliminate waves of enemy minions.
<i>nimen xian da wo daye</i> (你們先打 我打野)	I will join the team fight later. I will kill some jungle monsters first.
<i>wo bu rang tou lou</i> (我不讓頭嘍)	I will not purposefully give away kills to our carries anymore.

These commissives have the face effect of threatening the face of the speakers themselves as such utterances put pressure on them to do as promised. If they don't, chances are that their

allies keep on waiting until the actions are taken or even lose track of what to do next to play as a team. These players seem to take a knower stance, acting as if they knew all they need to address the situations they are responsible for. With regard to identity work, acts of commissives is a way of AUTHENTICATING one's own *LoL* gamer identity because his/her suggesting future actions shows that he/she is clear about what to do at particular points of time, which is knowledge that has passed down from old timers and professional players in the community. Interestingly, as Table 12 shows, some of the commissives go hand in hand with directives, including *xialu duo chayan*, *xian guai*, *da yi bo*, and *nimen xian da*. Actually, the collaborative performances of the two obligative acts have become a major frame of plans of actions in the communications among *LoL* players. Excerpt 45 below consists of the example of plans of actions *xian gui deng qu*.

(45) Game No. 21 (recorded on August 23, 2015)

- 1 蓋倫要求隊友盡速支援
gailun yaoqiu duiyou jinsu zhiyuan
'Garen is asking for assistance.'
- 2 艾克發出訊號告知隊友正在路上
aike fa chu xunhao gaozhi duiyou zheng zailushang
'Ekko is on the way.'
- 3 艾克 (Jungle) : 先規
xian gui
'Don't play too aggressively for now.'
- 4 等趣
deng qu
'I will go help you later.'

This excerpt is an exchange of messages between the team's top laner 蓋倫 and jungler 艾克. During early game, 蓋倫 has trouble laning against his opponent and therefore asks 艾克 for help (Line 1). 蓋倫's use of the Assist Me ping could be counted as a directive because it is a request (*yaoqiu*). Responding to the request, 艾克 sends off another signal, this time the On My Way alert, a commissive that states the desire that the speaker go to a location where he/she pings. He then posts two more lines of messages to explain his plan of action (Lines 3 and 4). While *xian gui* (先龜, mistyped as 先規) is a directive that tells 蓋倫 to play passive instead, *deng qu* (等去, mistyped as 等趣) is a commissive that gives 蓋倫 the promise that he will go assist him later. With the use of both cues to future action, 艾克 alludes to AUTHENTICATION to construct his identity as a member of the gamer community. We will be clearer about this formation of identity after looking into details of the speech act of directives in practice. Table 13 gives us a general picture of how directives are performed to make plans for *LoL* gameplay.

Table 13

Examples of directives as plans of actions in League of Legends game chat

Directives as Plans of Actions	Meaning
<i>zhua niming</i> (抓逆命)	Try to catch the enemy champion, Twisted Fate (逆命), in the coming team fight.
<i>duo da</i> (多打)	Help me lower the health of the jungle monster to a greater extent.
<i>ni bie name chong</i> (你別那麼衝)	Don't be too aggressive with your play.

<i>SUP chu jinren</i> (SUP 出金人)	Purchase Zhonya's Hourglass for your next item, Support.
<i>deng wo</i> (等我)	Wait for me.
<i>ta shang liu= = bie pin</i> (他上6 別拚)	The enemy has just achieved Level 6 and become much more powerful. Don't try to risk your life for his/hers.
<i>tui</i> (退)	Back off. The enemies are back to the battle field.
<i>gailun tan jiu hao le</i> (蓋倫坦就好了)	It is better that you build 蓋倫 with only defense items.
<i>sup chayan a</i> (sup 插眼阿)	Put wards on the map, Support.
<i>xian Q tamen buran huan bu ying</i> (先Q 他們 不然換不贏)	Try to poke the enemies with the Q ability, or we will not win the trades.
<i>hong gei wo haoma</i> (紅給我好嗎 JG)	Could you give me the red buff, Jungler?
<i>zhong tuan</i> (中團)	Initiate a team fight at the mid lane.
<i>AD huizhan duo hao bie zai qianpai</i> (AD 會戰躲好 別在前排)	Hide behind others during team fights, AD Carry.
<i>zhi chong</i> (直衝)	Just go and take down their structures.
<i>shi xiao long</i> (吃小龍)	Go slay the Dragon.
<i>chai ta la</i> (拆塔啦)	Go tear down the enemy turrets.
<i>ni zou ge wei hao ma</i> (妳走個位好嗎)	Could you position your champion to dodge skill shots?
<i>jg bang xia la</i> (jg 幫下啦)	Come to help the bottom lane, Jungler.
<i>beijishiong ni TOP hao ma?</i> (北極熊 你TOP 好嗎?)	Could I switch lanes with you, Volibear? Is it okay for you to play Top?
<i>gei wo baituo</i> (給我 拜託)	Give me the buff, please.
<i>lai huizhan</i> (來會戰)	Come to the team fight.
<i>daye siniao gei wo</i>	Let me kill Crimson Raptor, Jungler.

(打野 4 鳥給我)	
<i>kai long</i> (開龍)	Start to attack the Dragon.
<i>bang chi long</i> (幫吃龍)	Help me attack the Dragon.
<i>diu da zhong</i> (丟大 中)	Throw your skillshot at the mid lane.
<i>AD bu yao da tan</i> (AD 不要打坦)	Don't attack the enemy tank in the team fight, AD Carry.
<i>AD ni yao die wo de beidong</i> (AD 你要疊我的被動)	You should stack up my passive ability, AD Carry.
<i>kuai na AD zai xia</i> (快拿 AD 在下)	Get the Baron buff quickly. The enemy AD Carry is at the bottom lane and could not join a team fight against us.
<i>tui</i> (推)	Push the lane.
<i>shou jia</i> (守+)	Defend our home base.
<i>ni yao fangai ta nong..</i> (你要妨礙他農)	You should stop him from farming.
<i>wen zhe da</i> (穩者打)	Play safe.
<i>AD R</i>	Use your ultimate ability, AD.
<i>TOP han yi xia hao ma</i> (TOP 喊一下好嗎?)	Could you warn us of a gank, Top?

Different from commissives, directives bear the face effect of threatening the face of the addressees because they exert pressure on them to accomplish particular missions. The addressees' needs of not being impeded are thus unfulfilled. Despite the difference, directives resemble commissives in that they both allude to the speakers' knower stance toward what to do at a particular phase of a game. In terms of the implication for identity relations, directives

highlight the ideological perception of realness people have about the speakers' gamer identity because only those confident of their own knowledge about the game would grab the microphone to tell others what to do. In this respect, they call for the deployment of the tactic of AUTHENTICATION. One more thing about directives is that, as Table 13 shows, most of them are in the linguistic form of imperatives or negative imperatives, which have the most literal pragmatic force and are thereby considered most direct and impolite. This may have something to do with, again, the intense nature of the game. Other conventionalized forms in use that are rather indirect include interrogations (e.g. *hong gei wo hao ma, ni zou ge wei hao ma, na TOP hao ma, TOP han yi xia hao ma*) and statements of obligations (e.g. *bu yao da tan, ni yao die wo de beidong, ni yao fangai ta nong*). It is important to note that such indirect performances of directives may have totally different implications for intersubjectivity, as shown through the participants' relative stancetaking moves. That is, some requests of the *LoL* players should be interpreted as acts of pleading or begging that are based on their placating and subordinate stances toward others. The identity relation of AUTHENTICATION of the speakers' gamer identities cannot be easily told or is simply not used at all in these cases. Now, because directives are directed to other co-players as appraisals do, it is crucial to examine how they are evaluated in actual exchanges of talk. Below are two conversations I found in my data involving the uptakes of directives in *LoL* game chat, each of which makes a point about a different social consequence of intersubjectivity. Let's look at Excerpt 46 first.

(46) Game No. 26 (recorded on August 23, 2015)

- 1 維克特 (Mid) : AD 會戰朵好
AD huizhan duo hao
'Hide at the back during team fights, AD Carry.'
- 2 別在前排
bie zai qianpai
'Don't expose yourself in the front line.'
- 3 葵恩 (AD Carry) : ok
'Okay.'
- 4 維克特 (Mid) : 你死了沒輸出
ni si le mei shuchu
'There will be no damage output if you die.'

The interaction occurs at the game's roaming phase when team battles start to take place. The mid laner, 維克特, notices a problem that may have caused his team's defeat in previous team fights – the positioning of their team's AD Carry. 維克特 is aware that the role of AD Carries in a team battle is to do the most damage to enemies as efficiently as possible, so they have to keep themselves from enemy assassins or champions with effective CC spells. As a result, for the good of his team, 維克特 decides to give the AD Carry, 葵恩, an order to hide around corners when a team fight breaks out, not at the vanguard (Lines 1 and 2). Upon receiving the order, 葵恩 responds with a simple *ok*, an agreement marker that alludes to the commonality and thus the relations of power between 維克特 and 葵恩, a knower and a learner. Note here that 維克特 in Line 4 adds an external modification device⁵⁷ to his directive act that provides the reason why he asks 葵恩 to stay back – that there will be no

⁵⁷ According to Sifianou (1999), internal and external modification devices are linguistic elements used to mitigate or intensify an act of request. While internal modification devices like “probably” are used within the request act, external ones are additionally provided in the linguistic context.

damage output from the team if 葵恩 dies. This additional explanation further reaffirms the authenticity of 維克特's gamer identity, which is yet not so much a domineering figure as one who can reason for his/her stance.

Next, consider Excerpt 47.

(47) Game No. 31 (recorded on September 4, 2015)

- 1 逆命 (Mid) : 食小卜 4
shi xiaobu 4
'Kill,'
- 2 龍
long
'The Dragon.'
- 3 易大師 (Jungle) : 拆塔啦
chaita la
'Why not tear down their turrets?'
- 4 逆命 (Mid) : 唔通有龍唔食
wu tong you long wu shi
'Why not get the Dragon buff when it is available?'
- 5 易大師 (Jungle) : 有八龍還不拆塔
you balong hai bu chaita
'Why not tear down the enemy turrets when we have the Baron buff?'

Different from the above instance, Excerpt 47 is retrieved from a game where the interlocutors' side has an advantage over the enemy side at late game. The interaction takes place after the team slays Baron, which gives a buff lasting around three minutes when each team member is empowered with increased attack damage, ability power, as well as an aura that can promote nearby minions. In Lines 1 and 2, the mid laner 逆命 takes the initiative to

direct the rest of the teammates to also slay Dragon (*xiaolong*), the second most powerful neutral monster on Summoner's Rift that grants extra gold and the Dragon Slayer buff. In his view, it is better that the team take down Dragon once it respawns, in order to minimize the risk of the opposing team preempting the Five Dragons power spike. By giving the command, 逆命 is AUTHENTICATING his own gamer identity through overt display of knowledge about what is the next step to victory. In the following lines, the jungler, 易大師, grabs the spotlight and instead orders the other team members, including 逆命, to tear down the enemy turrets but not slaying Dragon. From 易大師's point of view, keeping pushing enemy turrets is a higher priority than other objectives when a team gets a Baron buff, because the buff gives ally minions great movement speed, resistance to slow effects, and extra attack range, which is conducive to the team's plan to intrude on the enemy team's territory. 易大師's directive shows this understanding toward the game, therefore AUTHENTICATING his identity as a core member of the community. Moreover, as 易大師 disobeys 逆命's command and disagrees with his stance, the relation of DISTINCTION arises as to their relative social positions in the community. Lines 4 and 5 are follow-up retorts, each of which is a stancetaking act directed against the one right above, rearranging the intersubjective relations of DISTINCTION suggested by the previous interlocutors.

As the two excerpts demonstrate, directives as plans for future plays could possibly trigger responses from the addressees, who may express their obedience or agreement

sometimes, but other times reject to be obedient by suggesting alternative operational plans.

4.3.6 Frequencies of use

So far we have had a big picture of what kinds of communicative practices can be found in the *LoL* game chat. From the analysis we can certainly say that the participation in such communicative practices is a way for a player to claim belonging to the *LoL* gamer community. However, that will be all for how the present study could elucidate the notion of community of practice if we do not look into finer details about the relationship between these communicative practices and players' locations and identities in the game world. In addition to the discourse analysis conducted in the last subsections, another method that will get us to the next level of implications is through a comparison among the frequencies of participation in the five communicative practices. The following figure is a rough sketch of the numbers of players engaging in the communicative practices in question.

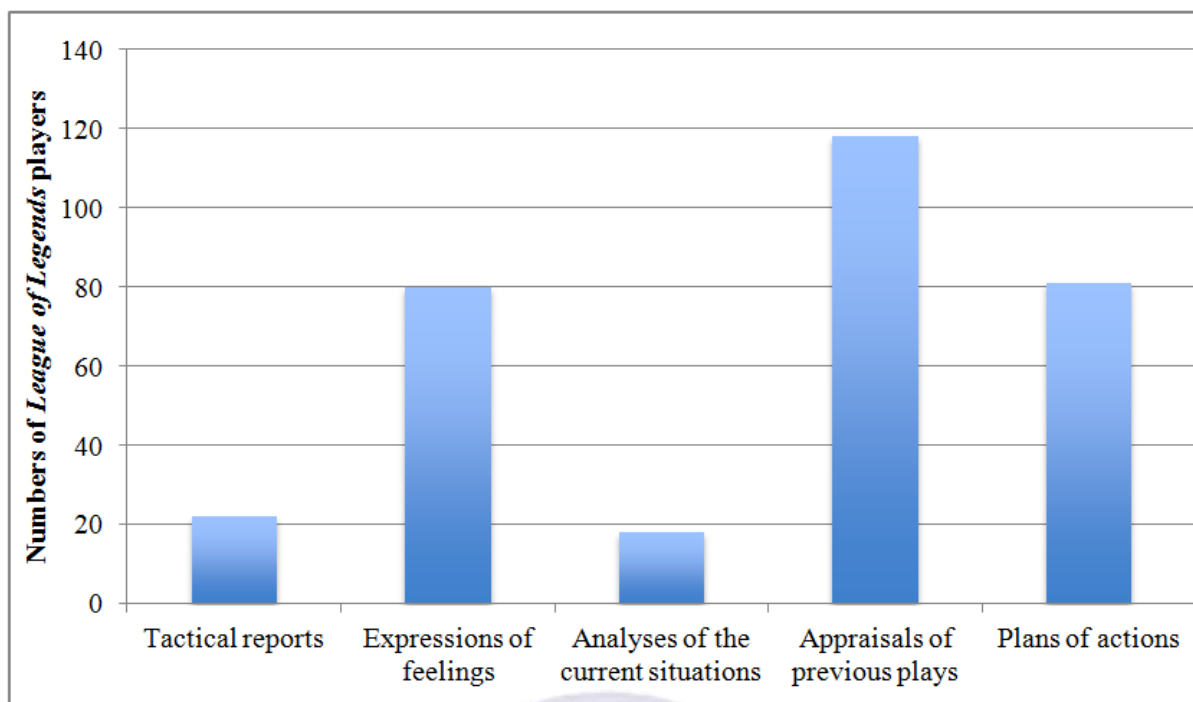
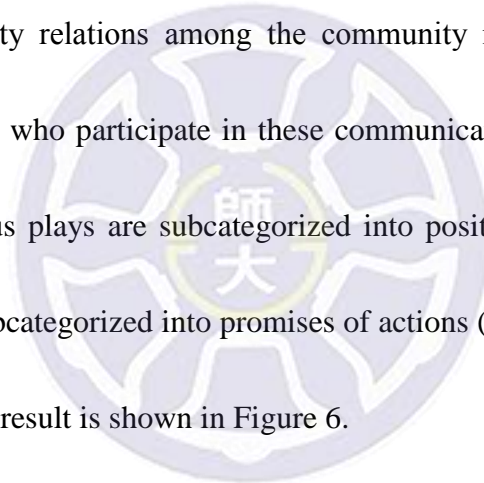


Figure 5. The numbers of players (out of the 400 informers) who participate in the communicative practices of tactical reports, expressions of feelings, analyses of the current situations, appraisals of previous plays, and plans of actions.

As shown, there is an uneven distribution of *LoL* players who take part in the five communicative practices. Expressions of feelings, appraisals of previous plays, and plans of actions are three that dominate the game chat. Among the three, the prevalence of the practice of expressions of feelings is probably the one that can be predicted or explained with the least effort. As discussed in the individual section about expressions of feelings, these representatives are mostly performed through the use of emoticons or simple interjections, which are easy to type out, with only a few keys, and can also be rich in meaning when interpreted as indirect suggestions or complaints. Maybe because of this, during *LoL* gameplay when there is little time to type messages, the players tend to choose to articulate

their identities through this communicative practice. Now one may have doubt about this explanation after he/she notes that the other dominant categories, appraisals of previous plays and plans of actions, are full of lengthy messages, those even lengthier than the ones of tactical reports and analyses of the current situations. The high frequencies of performances of appraisals of previous plays and plans of actions are actually one of our major findings about *LoL* players' identity work online. *LoL* players frequently resort to the two communicative practices not because they are easy to implement, but probably because they better work off the identity relations among the community members. Let's look at the numbers of team members who participate in these communicative practices in details; this time, appraisals of previous plays are subcategorized into positive and negative appraisals, and plans of actions are subcategorized into promises of actions (commissives) and directions to actions (directives). The result is shown in Figure 6.



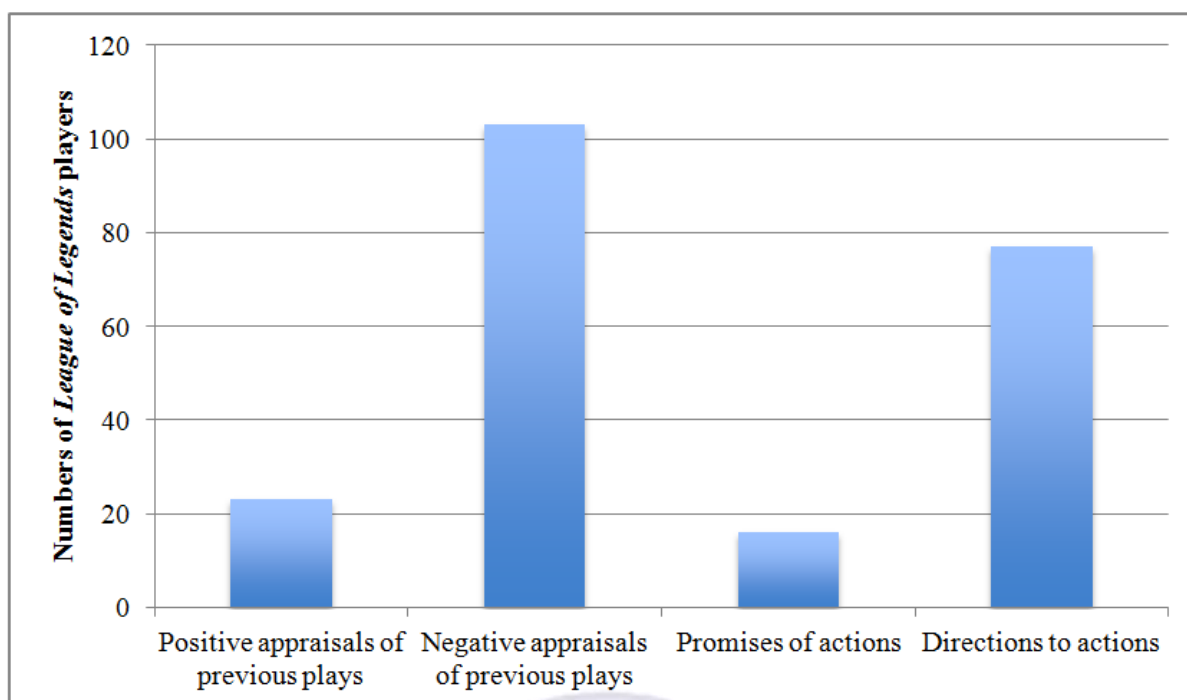


Figure 6. The numbers of players (out of the 400 informers) who participate in the communicative practices of positive appraisals of previous plays, negative appraisals of previous plays, promises of actions, and directions to actions.

From this figure we can see that, in fact, not all types of appraisals of previous plays and plans of actions are common communications. Negative appraisals and directions to actions are the two that take up most of the space on the chat window. Interestingly, these two subcategories of communicative practices resemble each other in terms of their resulting face effects and identity relations. With the face effects, they both threaten some addressees' face in some ways. Negative appraisals of previous plays achieve the effect through impoliteness; directions to actions achieve that through negligence of people's negative wants of not being impeded. From the perspective of intersubjective ideologies, they both are able to emit a sense of social difference between the speakers and some addressees, pretty much as the

knowers and the learners.⁵⁸ It is just that they achieve this sense of inequality between social powers in different ways. While negative appraisals do it through DE-AUTHENTICATING the addressees' gamer identities, directives AUTHENTICATE the speakers' claims to their identities as the community members. Those *LoL* players who usually use the in-game chat command to communicate with others, therefore, could be said to have the tendency to challenge one another's knowledge about the game or show off theirs. Their identities are yet mercurial, as a proposed intersubjective relation could be overturned or cancelled easily with further negotiation of words. We will come back to this implication later in the chapter of discussion, where it is related to other findings as to *LoL* gamer identity.

4.4 Identity categories of *League of Legends* gamers

So far, we have only seen gamer identities emerge in separate practices, including the participation in and reactions to them. Each *LoL* player is considered more or less belonging to the community based on his/her tendencies to take part in the practices that are rich in ideologies; negotiation of identities has been shown in cut-short exchanges of talk that simply mean to exemplify the social consequences of the identity practices. Because an individual could engage in multiple identity practices simultaneously, and they may choose to engage in one practice more than the others, it is crucial that we put our eyes on the full chat logs of the

⁵⁸ Note that the generalization here does not apply to the few cases where the speakers ask genuine questions about whether others could do something extra (not part of their "responsibilities") for them.

matches of games, where repetitive choices of identity practices are revealed, to better contribute to the community of practice framework. It is by doing so that the emergence of linguistic styles and the participants' production of personas can really be visible to us. Since it would be impossible and unnecessary to detail all of the interactions among the *LoL* players, for discussion I have chosen five matches of the game where some typical, ethnographically specific identity categories emerge through in-game chatting. Note that the first four excerpts of game chat will be cut into meaningful chunks for discussion, on account of their great lengths. Excerpt 48 below presents only an initial part of the chat log of Game No. 40.

(48) Game No. 40 (recorded on September 6, 2015)

- 1 伊莉絲要求隊友盡速支援
yilisi yaoqiu duiyou jinsu zhiyuan
'Elise is asking for assistance.'
- 2 伊莉絲要求隊友盡速支援
yilisi yaoqiu duiyou jinsu zhiyuan
'Elise is asking for assistance.'
- 3 伊莉絲 (Jungle) : 幫我差眼
bang wo chayan
'Help me place a ward there.'
- 4 伊莉絲發出訊號告知隊友正在路上
yilisi fa chu xunhao gaozhi duiyou zheng zailushang
'Elise is on the way.'
- 5 菲歐拉 (Top) : y4ru3283??
- 6 伊莉絲 (Jungle) : 3Q
'Thank you.'
- 7 我開紅
wo kai hong
'I will start jungling from the red buff.'
- 8 伊莉絲要求隊友盡速支援

- yilisi yaoqiu duiyou jinsu zhiyuan*
 ‘Elise is asking for assistance.’
- 9 伊莉絲要求隊友盡速支援
yilisi yaoqiu duiyou jinsu zhiyuan
 ‘Elise is asking for assistance.’
- 10 伊莉絲 (Jungle) : 石像對
shixiang dui
 ‘Krug, Yes.’

A major difference between the chats in the virtual world of *LoL* and those happening in real life or other MMOGs (especially MMORPGs) is that the former are seldom initiated or intended for what we normally consider to be “chats.” That is, *LoL* players rarely use the chat channel to “socialize” with others through greetings, casual talks about themselves with regard to their daily experiences, personal interests, etc. As we have already seen in the last section, about their communicative practices, almost all of the message posts are responses to what has been going on in the games, no matter whether they are for tactical or emotional use. Because of this, the conversational topics in the game chat are usually inconsistent, each of which may be regarding different events occurring during gaming.

Excerpt 48 here, for example, revolves around the team’s preparation for the start of the game, before minions spawn. The earliest lines of player messages are given off when the players are on their ways to the key passages on the map to keep themselves aware of early-game jungle invasions from the enemy team (see Figure 7). The team’s jungler 伊莉絲 rings the Assist Me ping twice and performs a directive to ask the top laner 菲歐拉 to help

her ward the other side of the jungle (Lines 1-3). She expresses thanks and states the reason for the request in the following, that she wants to start jungling at Red Brambleback (*hong*), instead of Blue Sentinel, which is located in the opposite direction on Summoner's Rift. In Lines 8-10, 伊莉絲 tries to direct other teammates, this time AD and Support, to finish up the neutral monsters Ancient Krug and Krug (*shixiang*) before going to the bot lane (see Figure 8).



Figure 7. A screenshot of the team getting ready for the game by positioning themselves in the key passages on the map.



Figure 8. A screenshot of the bottom laners helping the jungler kill the Krugs.

The series of directives show that 伊莉絲 has had a high degree of confidence in how to progress through the game as a jungler. She alludes to the identity relation of AUTHENTICATION where she aligns herself with those professional or experienced players who she learns from about jungling. Intermingled with 伊莉絲's incessant requests is 菲歐拉's question, *y4ru3283??*, which would mean *ziji da??* (自己打??) if 菲歐拉 has switched the input language from English to Chinese. She is asking whether 伊莉絲 is able to jungle without any help from her teammates. This genuine information-seeking question also suggests that 菲歐拉 historicizes her own identity as a *LoL* gamer because only when a player has had similar gaming experiences or studied about the game – that junglers usually start jungling with the help from allies – could he/she have such a doubt. Excerpt 49 below

continues with another issue raised up in the game; it shows how 伊莉絲 would blatantly criticize her teammates and how people react to her attacks:

(49) Game No. 40 (recorded on September 6, 2015) (continued)

- 11 伊莉絲發出訊號告知所有人敵人消失
yilisi fa chu xunhao gaozhi suoyouren diren xiaoshi
‘Elise signals that enemies are missing.’
- 12 伊莉絲 (Jungle) : 87
‘Idiot.’
- 13 伊瑞莉雅 (敵人) 正在大殺特殺!
yiruliya zhengzai dashatesha
‘Enemy Irelia is on a killing spree.’
- 14 李星 (敵人) 正在大殺特殺!
lixing zhengzai dashatesha
‘Enemy Lee Sin is on a killing spree.’
- 15 伊莉絲 (Jungle) : 87TOP
‘Idiotic top laner.’
- 16 TOP 新手
TOP xinshou
‘Our top laner is a newbie.’
- [...]
- 17 伊莉絲 (Jungle) : AD 擬出甚麼裝備啊
AD ni chu shenme zhuangbei a
‘What kind of items do you buy, AD?’
- 18 艾希 (AD Carry) : ?
- 19 伊莉絲 (Jungle) : 擬出那樣裝備沒用
ni chu nayang zhuangbei mei yong
‘Your item build right now is useless.’
- [...]
- 20 伊莉絲 (Jungle) : AD 裝養
AD zhuangyang
‘AD,’
- 21 爪養
zhuayiang
‘Your build cannot give you enough damage output.’

- 22 艾希 (AD Carry) : ...
- 23 伊莉絲 (Jungle) : 你不出無盡就是爪養
ni bu chu wujin jiushi zhuayang
 ‘You will not deal much damage if you do not build yourself
 with Infinity Edge.’
- 24 艾希 (AD Carry) : 再出了好口
zai chu le hao me
 ‘I am on the way of building that item, okay?’

Starting from Line 11, in response to 菲歐拉’s death from a one-on-one fight with the enemy top laner, 伊莉絲 yells out 87 and *xinshou* to call 菲歐拉. As part of 伊莉絲’s negative appraisal against 菲歐拉’s performance in the engagement, 87 and *xinshou* are two derogatory names that have the effect of threatening 菲歐拉’s face need of not being viewed as unintelligent or unskillful. Adding that the skill at playing *LoL* is the symbolic capital within the community, the name-calling could also threaten her social standing in the group of players, an enactment of DE-AUTHENTICATION. Moreover, with the label of *xinshou*, 伊莉絲 also resorts to the tactic of DISTINCTION to mark 菲歐拉 as an out-group or peripheral member, given *xinshou*’s associative power of recalling the actual minority group of newbies in the virtual society. After a while, 伊莉絲 redirects her attention to the itemization of the AD Carry. She uses a rhetoric question to challenge 艾希’s thinking about her item build (Line 17). Here 伊莉絲 can be seen as taking an accusatory stance toward 艾希’s play so far, just as she does toward 菲歐拉. However, 伊莉絲 actually makes a point why she thinks 艾希’s build is not okay – that 艾希 will not be able to deal much damage for her

team with such a set of items (*zhuayang*, mistyped as 爪養) (Lines 20-21). In Line 23, 伊莉絲 further gives 艾希 advice about item choices, but with a threatening tone – that 艾希 should purchase Infinity Edge earlier in the game, or her damage output will be too low to become a threat to the enemy team. By the face-threatening acts of both negative appraisal (Lines 17 and 19) and a suggestion of a plan for improvement (Line 23), 伊莉絲 is enacting not only DE-AUTHENTICATION against 艾希’s core membership in the community but also AUTHENTICATION of her own claim to an experienced gamer identity. Now turn to 艾希’s uptake of 伊莉絲’s stance. In Line 18, 艾希 employs a question marker ? to respond to 伊莉絲’s first attack. The use of a question marker and nothing else gives the recipients a sense of nonchalance and the sender’s confidence about him/herself. As 伊莉絲 strengthens her point more clearly by further justifications for her attack, 艾希 expresses her feeling with ..., which symbolizes her speechlessness and helplessness toward the situation (i.e. where 伊莉絲 keeps picking on 艾希 for her wrong build). When 伊莉絲 furthermore performs a directive (Line 23) that damages 艾希’s face want to be free from imposition of the choice of an item, 艾希 finally defends herself by saying that she has been on the way to the build of Infinity Edge (Line 24). From easy choices of words (? and ...) to a bold retort in the responses, 艾希 seems to become more and more impatient about 伊莉絲’s nagging. 艾希’s last retort about the subject has the effect of saving her face and, more importantly, re-AUTHENTICATING her gamer identity; it shows that she knows vividly how to build her

champion, and it is needless for 伊莉絲 to remind her of that. Later on in the game (Lines 25-35), a turn of events seems to undermine 伊莉絲's superior stance:

(50) Game No. 40 (recorded on September 6, 2015) (continued)

- 25 伊莉絲擊殺猞猁 (敵人) 完成雙殺!
yilisi jisha yasu wancheng shuangsha
'Elise has slain Enemy Yasuo for a double kill!'
- 26 伊莉絲擊殺蒙多醫生 (敵人) 完成三連殺!
yilisi jisha mengduoyisheng wancheng san liansha
'Elise has slain Enemy Dr. Mundo for a triple kill!'
- 27 艾希 (AD Carry) : ...
- 28 布里茨 (Support) : @@
- 29 伊莉絲已經無人能擋!
yilisi yijing wurenngdang
'Elise is unstoppable!'
- 30 艾希 (AD Carry) : 都給你
dou gei ni
'You can take all of the kills.'
- 31 伊莉絲 (Jungle) : sOR 我還以為會 4 連殺
sOR wo hai yiwei hui 4 liansha
'Sorry. I thought that I would get a quadra kill bonus.'
- 32 艾希 (AD Carry) : 傻眼へ
shayan ei
'Shocking.'
- 33 伊莉絲 (Jungle) : 好啦等等給你
hao la dengdeng gei ni
'Don't be angry. I will let you get the kills later.'
- 34 艾希 (AD Carry) : 全都給你
quan dou gei ni
'You can take all.'
- 35 我在旁邊看
wo zai pangbian kan
'I can just stand by and watch.'

In a winning engagement with 艾希, 伊莉絲 picks up four kills (Lines 25, 26, and 29). Judging from 艾希's reaction to this result, the emotive stance of ..., again, we can see that 艾希 is unhappy about it. The source of 艾希's annoyance is the fact that, instead of letting her get the kills, 伊莉絲 last hit on all of the dying enemies and received all of the bonuses from them. According to the team position responsibilities I organize in the previous section, the majority in the community frowns upon this deed because AD Carries should be the best investment of getting gold and strong items for a team to head toward the victory. In Lines 30 and 34, 艾希 expresses her displeasure in an ironic way. She performs the directive *dou gei ni* to claim that she will give up all the kills to 伊莉絲, which is sarcastic considering the community value placed on an AD Carry's development throughout the game. This line of speech is an instance of the use of DENATURALIZATION as it creates a deliberate discontinuity within 艾希's self-presentation as a *LoL* gamer. It is unlikely that 艾希, as a formerly authentic gamer (judged from her previous performance in the game), would all of a sudden say things like that, unless the statement is understood as a playful use of language. In the following lines, 艾希 also expresses her feeling of being shocked (*shayan*) by what 伊莉絲 did in the earlier play (Line 32). So far, this is the first time when 伊莉絲's *LoL* gamer membership is challenged, as 伊莉絲's play in the engagement is clearly a negative identity practice in the community. Upon noting this social setback of her gamer identity, 伊莉絲 tries to excuse herself for the wrongdoing; in Line 31, she performs the self-effacing act of

apology (*sOR*, a typo for *sor*) and continues with an explanation – that she thought she would be rewarded with a Quadra Kill bonus. (However, because the fourth kill in Line 29 occurs a while later than the first three kills, the game does not consider it a four-kill streak.) Afterwards, 伊莉絲 even promises kills to 艾希 using a softened tone (Line 33), with the modal particle *la*, instead of her used-to-be strict voice. With both of the acts of apology and commissive to take an action which reduces one’s own face, 伊莉絲 for the first time sets her ego aside and agrees that she does not play like a pro all the time. Despite this, in the rest of the game chat among the group of *LoL* players, 伊莉絲 still holds onto her tough stance towards her allies’ plays that could potentially cause her losing the game:

- (51) Game No. 40 (recorded on September 6, 2015) (continued)
- 36 伊莉絲發出訊號告知隊友正在路上
yilisi fa chu xunhao gaozhi duiyou zheng zailushang
 ‘Elise is on the way.’
- 37 伊莉絲發出訊號告知所有人警戒
yilisi fa chu xunhao gaozhi suoyouren jingjie
 ‘Elise signals to be careful.’
- 38 伊莉絲 (Jungle) : 清兵完再打
qingbing wan zai da
 ‘Get into the fight after we clear up all the minions.’
- 39 伊莉絲發出訊號要求卡特蓮娜撤退
yilisi fa chu xunhao yaoqiu katelianna chetui
 ‘Elise signals Katarina to fall back.’
- 40 伊莉絲發出訊號告知所有人警戒
yilisi fa chu xunhao gaozhi suoyouren jingjie
 ‘Elise signals to be careful.’
- 41 伊莉絲 (Jungle) : 退到塔下
tui dao ta xia

‘Back off to the turret.’

[...]

42 伊莉絲標記了伊瑞莉雅（敵人）

yilisi biaoji le yiruiliya

‘Elise has targeted Enemy Ireliia.’

43 伊莉絲發出訊號告知所有人警戒

yilisi fa chu xunhao gaozhi suoyouren jingjie

‘Elise signals to be careful.’

44 伊莉絲 (Jungle) : 幹手上

gan shou shang

‘Fuck. Go defend the turret at the top lane.’

45 卡特蓮娜發出訊號告知隊友正在路上

katerianna fa chu xunhao gaozhi duiyou zheng zailushang

‘Katarina is on the way.’

46 伊莉絲發出訊號要求艾希撤退

yilisi fa chu xunhao yaoqiu aishi chetui

‘Elise signals Ashe to fall back.’

47 伊莉絲發出訊號要求布里茨撤退

yilisi fa chu xunhao yaoqiu bulici chetui

‘Elise signals Blitzcrank to fall back.’

48 伊莉絲 (Jungle) : 別追

bie zhui

‘Don’t chase.’

49 艾希標記了李星（敵人）

aishi biaoji le lixing

‘Ashe has targeted Enemy Lee Sin.’

50 伊莉絲發出訊號要求布里茨撤退

yilisi fa chu xunhao yaoqiu bulici chetui

‘Elise signals Blitzcrank to fall back.’

51 艾希發出訊號要求布里茨撤退

aishi fa chu xunhao yaoqiu bulici chetui

‘Ashe signals Blitzcrank to fall back.’

52 伊莉絲 (Jungle) : 不要打啊

bu yao da a

‘Don’t fight.’

53 先八上路兵推出去

xian ba shanglu bing tui chuqu

‘Clear up the minions at the top lane, first.’

- 54 菲歐拉 (Top) : 插演
chayan
'Ward.'
- 55 伊莉絲發出訊號要求菲歐拉撤退
yilisi fa chu xunhao yaoqiu feioula chetui
'Elise signals Fiora to fall back.'
- 56 伊莉絲發出訊號告知所有人警戒
yilisi fa chu xunhao gaozhi suoyouren jingjie
'Elise signals to be careful.'
- 57 菲歐拉發出訊號告知所有人警戒
faioula fa chu xunhao gaozhi suoyouren jingjie
'Fiora signals to be careful.'
- 58 伊莉絲 (Jungle) : 一群白癡嗎?說先打 TOP 不懂?
yiqun baichi ma shou xian da TOP bu dong
'Are you idiots? Do you not understand my words? Eliminate their top laner first.'
- 59 菲歐拉 (Top) : 那時診部打?
na shi zhen bu da
'Why didn't we get into the fight at the moment?'
- 60 伊莉絲 (Jungle) :]
- 61 菲歐拉 (Top) : 被抓了還不打??
bei zhua le hai bu da
'Why didn't we get into the fight when one of our teammates was caught?'
- 62 伊莉絲 (Jungle) : 問你啊
wen ni a
'You are the one to ask.'
- [...]
- 63 伊莉絲 (Jungle) : 等等之街推中
dengdeng zhijie tui zhong
'Later we should all push the mid lane.'
- 64 伊莉絲發出訊號告知隊友正在路上
yilisi fa chu xunhao gaozhi duiyou zheng zailushang
'Elise is on the way.'
- 65 伊莉絲 (Jungle) : 等等
dengdeng
'Wait.'
- 66 我先爸是路兵推出去

wo xian ba shilu bing tui chuqu

‘Let me clear up the enemy minions first.’

伊莉絲 makes good use of the built-in alert pings and directives to tell her teammates what to do at different points of the remaining game, such as starting a fight after cleaning up all of the enemy minions (Line 38), retreating to the turret (Line 41), defending the structures at the top lane (Line 44), not chasing after the enemies (Line 48), etc. She even makes a negative comment on the rest of others (Line 58), calling them idiots (*baichi*) who do not get the importance of taking down the enemy top laner in a team fight. Each of the face threatening acts shows her clinging to the social position at the core and indirectly suggests her teammates peripheral standing in the community, as if she were the coach of the team. Within this process of construction of her persona, the top laner 菲歐拉 has tried to compete for the core position with 伊莉絲, as shown in her performance of a directive (Line 54, an order that tells others to ward) and questions as to whether 伊莉絲 is right about when to initiate the fight (Lines 59 and 61). Nevertheless, 伊莉絲 deems 菲歐拉’s challenges ridiculous by a simple counter question, *wen ni a*, which suggests that it is 菲歐拉 who should be responsible for the team’s loss in the particular team fight. In other words, 菲歐拉’s enactment of DE-AUTHENTICATION against 伊莉絲 is cancelled immediately by the rhetoric question which suggests a counter identity relation of DE-AUTHENTICATION against 菲歐拉 herself. Figure 9 shows what is going on in the game after the losing team fight; the enemy

champions have invaded the team's home base and started to tear down inner structures.



Figure 9. A screenshot of the enemy champions invading the team's home base after the losing team fight.

In this example, we discover an ethnographically specific identity category of *LoL* players who like to direct others to take actions according to what they or most of the experienced players want out of particular team positions or champion roles. 伊莉絲, in Game No. 40, seems to take this idiosyncratic cultural position emerging from the *LoL* game chat. It is a type of *LoL* gamer identity which I will call *directors*, as if they were in the film-making business; they tend to historicize their identities through claims of how to play the game, most of which impede the addressed players' wishes to play in their own styles, like performances of directives as plans of actions and negative appraisals of others' previous

plays. In other words, the persona of a *director* is constructed mainly through repeated use of the interactional stance of transmitting information about what is the best ways to win the game and accusing other players of not doing their jobs as particular champions. He/she usually enacts the tactics of AUTHENTICATION of his/her claims and DE-AUTHENTICATION against others' to the gamer identity to show their relative social power in the community. From the above exchange of talk, we can also note that the concept of an identity category is not rooted in demographic reality but interactionally mobilized across turns and co-constructed by all of the interlocutors. In Lines 27-35, 伊莉絲's original stance claims at the beginning of the game are challenged by 艾希, who ironically lets 伊莉絲 continue with the bad decisions to deprive 艾希 of the possibilities to get stronger to carry the team. 伊莉絲's construction of her gamer identity is not solely dependent on her own performance and claims, but based partly on the co-participant 艾希's follow-up evaluations and responses. That is, in the eyes of 艾希, it is highly possible that 伊莉絲 is not qualified to be a *director* at all, owing to the fact that 伊莉絲 "steals" kills from 艾希 for her own benefit. We will be clearer about this negotiation of meaning later.

Now let's move our attention to another game that may feature other local identity categories; again, the excerpt below only displays the beginning part of the conversation:

(52) Game No. 85 (recorded on October 31, 2015)

1 李星發出訊號告知所有人敵人消失

- lixing fa chu xunhao gaozhi suoyouren diren xiaoshi*
'Lee Sin signals that enemies are missing.'
- 2 **李星**發出訊號告知所有人敵人消失
lixing fa chu xunhao gaozhi suoyouren diren xiaoshi
'Lee Sin signals that enemies are missing.'
- 3 **露璐**發出訊號告知所有人敵人消失
lulu fa chu xunhao gaozhi suoyouren diren xiaoshi
'Lulu signals that enemies are missing.'
- 4 **露璐**發出訊號告知所有人敵人消失
lulu fa chu xunhao gaozhi suoyouren diren xiaoshi
'Lulu signals that enemies are missing.'
- 5 **露璐**發出訊號告知所有人敵人消失
lulu fa chu xunhao gaozhi suoyouren diren xiaoshi
'Lulu signals that enemies are missing.'
- 6 **露璐**發出訊號告知所有人敵人消失
lulu fa chu xunhao gaozhi suoyouren diren xiaoshi
'Lulu signals that enemies are missing.'
- 7 **汎** (AD Carry) : 可以不要一直點嗎
keyi bu yao yizhi dian ma
'Could you stop pinging?'
- 8 謝謝
xiexie
'Thank you.'
- [...]
- 9 **露璐**發出訊號告知所有人敵人消失
lulu fa chu xunhao gaozhi suoyouren diren xiaoshi
'Lulu signals that enemies are missing.'
- 10 **露璐**發出訊號告知所有人敵人消失
lulu fa chu xunhao gaozhi suoyouren diren xiaoshi
'Lulu signals that enemies are missing.'
- 11 **露璐**發出訊號告知所有人敵人消失
lulu fa chu xunhao gaozhi suoyouren diren xiaoshi
'Lulu signals that enemies are missing.'
- 12 **露璐**發出訊號告知所有人敵人消失
lulu fa chu xunhao gaozhi suoyouren diren xiaoshi
'Lulu signals that enemies are missing.'
- 13 **露璐** (Support) : 沒治癒?
mei zhiyu

- ‘No Heal?’
- 14 汎 (AD Carry) : 你那摸遠
ni namo yuan
‘You were too far away.’
- 15 誰叫你哪摸衝
shei jiao ni namo chong
‘You were playing too aggressively.’
- 16 露璐 (Support) : 靠唄喔 我充實你就要放阿
kaobei o wo chong shi ni jiu yao fang a
‘For crying out loud. You should use the spell while I got into the fight.’
- [...]
- 17 汎發出訊號告知所有人敵人消失
fan fa chu xunhao gaozhi suoyouren diren xiaoshi
‘Vayne signals that enemies are missing.’
- 18 汎發出訊號告知所有人敵人消失
fan fa chu xunhao gaozhi suoyouren diren xiaoshi
‘Vayne signals that enemies are missing.’
- 19 露璐 (Support) : ??
- 20 汎 (AD Carry) : 我的冰=
wo de bing
‘My minions.’
- [...]
- 21 汎 (AD Carry) : 不要動兵
bu yao dong bing
‘Don’t hit on the minions.’
- [...]
- 22 汎要求支援外防禦塔
fan yaoqiu zhiyuan waifangyuta
‘Vayne is asking for assistance.’
- 23 汎要求支援外防禦塔
fan yaoqiu zhiyuan waifangyuta
‘Vayne is asking for assistance.’
- 24 露璐 (Support) : ??
- 25 汎要求支援外防禦塔
fan yaoqiu zhiyuan waifangyuta
‘Vayne is asking for assistance.’
- 26 汎要求支援外防禦塔

fan yaoqiu zhiyuan waifangyuta

‘Wayne is asking for assistance.’

- 27 汎 (AD Carry) : 你人??
ni ren
‘Where were you?’
- 28 你會嗎= =.
ni hui ma
‘Do you know how to defend this?’

As discussed in earlier sections, the Enemy Missing signals (*diren xiaoshi*) are displayed on the map as question marks, which are frequently used by *LoL* players to cast questions about allies’ previous plays that may have caused displeasure to them. In this excerpt, all of the uses of the alert ping are like that, constituting threatening acts directed to particular addressees. The first passage of the conversation encompasses 李星 and 露璐’s multiple alert pings on those team members who have not positioned themselves properly on the map before the minions spawn. Annoyed by the sharp noises, the AD Carry 汎 asks them to stop pinging (Line 7), which is followed by an expression of gratitude for the cooperation (Line 8). This incident shows that 汎 is the kind of player who is not inhibited to voice her opinions through the game chat, or not afraid of the social consequence brought about by such a face threatening act. During the laning phase, Support 露璐 uses the Enemy Missing alert ping to get the 汎’s attention to what just happened in a duo fight against the enemy bot laners. 露璐 wants to question why 汎 did not use the summoner spell Heal to save their lives, but, for the sake of politeness, she tries to excuse 汎 for the play in the first place – that 汎 may

have used Heal lately, which goes into cooldown and thus cannot be activated again so soon (*mei zhiyu*). Construing 露璐's utterance as an attack, 汎 rebuts by blaming 露璐 for the disadvantage in the engagement, accusing 露璐 of playing too aggressively and distancing herself from 汎 too far away. That is why 汎 is unable to use Heal to restore health to both of them. Realizing how brazen 汎 is, 露璐 ruthlessly shifts to an accusatory stance, yelling a dirty word (*kaobei*) to her face and counter-charging that it was her who has made a mistake, that 汎 should have used Heal once 露璐 initiated the fight (Line 16). Here we notice that 汎 is very sensitive to her face being damaged or her gamer identity being DE-AUTHENTICATED, so she tries to place the responsibility for the bad play on somebody else. Unexpectedly, her accusation backfires, exchanged for 露璐's counter-accusation, which DE-AUTHENTICATES 汎's claim to the gamer identity to a greater level. Despite the setback, 汎 explicitly displays her knowledge about how to play the game in the following lines, by telling 露璐 not to hit on the minions (Lines 20-21) and defend the turret (Lines 22, 23, 25, and 26). Like 伊莉絲 in the previous case, 汎 seemingly wants to be the boss of the team, or at least of the bottom lane duo. Such speech acts as directives and representatives as negative appraisals hint at 汎's deployment of AUTHENTICATION of her identity as a legitimate *LoL* player and DE-AUTHENTICATION against others'. However, 汎's gamer identity is once again put into question in her next engagement in talk, this time by another participant of the team:

(53) Game No. 85 (recorded on October 31, 2015) (continued)

29 易大師 (敵人) 終結了李星的二連殺!

yidashi zhongjie le lixing de er liansha

‘Enemy Master Yi has ended Lee Sin’s killing spree.’

30 汎 (AD Carry) : 沒一個保輸出

meiyige bao shuchu

‘No one protected the damage dealer.’

31 李星 (Jungle) : 這樣就是要退阿

zheyang jiushi yao tui a

‘We should just back off in this situation.’

32 保什麼

bao sheme

‘Protecting what?’

[...]

33 汎標記了安妮 (敵人)

fan biaoji le anni

‘Vayne has targeted Enemy Annie.’

34 李星正在大殺特殺

lixing zhengzai dashatesha

‘Lee Sin is on a killing spree.’

35 汎發出訊號告知所有人敵人消失

fan fa chu xunhao gaozhi suoyouren diren xiaoshi

‘Vayne signals that enemies are missing.’

36 汎 (AD Carry) : 檢喔

jian o

‘Are you just stealing my kill?’

37 李星 (Jungle) : 你可以安靜嗎小孩

ni keyi anjing ma xiaohai

‘Could you shut your mouth up, Kid?’

38 汎 (AD Carry) : 你幾歲

ni ji sui

‘How old are you?’

39 露璐 (Support) : 你好吵喔 廢物 AD

ni hao chao o feiwu AD

‘You are so annoying, rubbish AD Carry.’

40 汎 (AD Carry) : 好好

haohao

‘Okay. Okay.’

From Line 30, 汎 reflects on an earlier team fight, where, as she complains, no one protected her from enemy attacks. In response, 李星 corrects 汎's interpretation of the losing team fight as the others' fault, teaching 汎 that, when the situation has gone bad for the team in a fight, they all should find a way to retreat from the battlefield, instead of fighting till death (Lines 31-32). This is another example of 汎's gamer identity getting DE-AUTHENTICATED because of her own misjudgment about the other players' plays. In the one last piece of conversation in this match of game (Lines 33-40), 汎 is unhappy about 李星 taking the last hit on an enemy champion that she targeted in the first place. She refers to 李星's behavior as *jian* (a typo for 撿), meaning that 李星 stole the kill on purpose. Surprisingly, rather than answering back on the subject as he did before, 李星 this time directly picks on 汎 about her communicative practice of always recriminating against others on something going wrong in the game; he asks 汎 to shut up and calls her by the pejorative name *shiaohai*, which compares 汎 to a kid who cries to get people's attention. Even though 汎 tries to talk back by claiming that she may not be younger than 李星 (Line 38), her speech is followed by another attack from 露璐, who stands with 李星's point of view while expressing her displeasure with 汎's being too annoying and reducing her to *feiwu*, a useless item. This interaction tells us that, toward the end of the game, the members of the team have lost their patience with 汎's bellyaching. They choose to DE-AUTHENTICATE 汎's membership in the community through the metacognitive

identification that 汎's performances of speech acts in general constitute a negative identity practice.

From this excerpt we observe a persona that is very similar to the one 伊莉絲 constructs in Game No. 40. We notice that 汎 is a kind of player who keeps telling others what to do or making comments on their plays. What is different in this case, however, is the fact that people tend to disagree with 汎 when she makes claims about what should have been done to win the game. To her teammates, she is not so much a *director* as a self-conceited, immature player who constantly seeks opportunities to displease or provoke others with insults. She is like the so-called *flamer* on many of the forums or online message boards. Since these people's arguments over the gameplay decisions are ridiculous to most of the other *LoL* players, their enactment of AUTHENTICATION for their gamer identity or DE-AUTHENTICATION against others could easily incite retaliation or efforts to counter the moves. As I want to compound the importance of the identity category of *flamers*, let's look at another example of it. Excerpt 54 is the first half of the chat in Game No. 58:

(54) Game No. 58 (recorded on September 25, 2015)

- 1 狻猊 發出訊號告知所有人敵人消失
yasu fa chu xunhao gaozhi suoyouren diren xiaoshi
'Yasuo signals that enemies are missing.'
- 2 狻猊 (mid) : 艹
chao
'Fuck.'
- 3 阿姆姆 (jungler) : 剛就 3 之了==

- 4 *gang jiu 3 zhi le*
‘There were three enemies.’
你= =
ni
‘You.’
- 5 犸宿 (mid) : 是喔
shi o
‘Was it so?’
- 6 哀
ai
‘(Sighing).’
- [...]
- 7 犸宿 (mid) : 844 沁 13196 廿
8 下路根本白癡
xialu genben baichi
‘The bottom laners are idiots for sure.’
- 9 秒
chao
‘Fuck.’
- 10 沒腦
meinao
‘Brainless.’
- 11 飛斯 (top) : = =
- 12 犸宿 (mid) : 哀
ai
‘(Sighing).’
- 13 殘寫死不退 歸塔有屁用
canxie si bu tui guita you diao yong
‘With only a little health left and not going back to the base, she is so stupid to hide behind the turret.’
- 14 哀
ai
‘(Sighing).’
- 15 飛斯 (top) : 同學
tongxue
‘My friend,’
- 16 他被包抄
ta bei baochao

‘She was surrounded by enemies.’

大家都有看到

dajia dou you kan dao

‘Everybody saw it.’

The interaction in this game is mainly among the jungler, mid, and top laners. The very first exchange of talk (Lines 1-6) revolves around 狻猊’s earlier move to battle against three of the enemy champions. In Line 2, 狻猊 curses in reaction to his death from the fight, which he thought he would win. 阿穆姆 believes that 狻猊 did not expect there were three enemies against him, so reminds him of that (Line 3). In response to 阿穆姆’s analysis of the play, 狻猊 adopts an unknowing stance to express his helplessness toward the result. The use of *ai* (Line 6) here has the effect of directing the focus to the unfortunateness of the incident, instead of how 狻猊 messed up the play. In this respect, 狻猊 is defending his gamer identity from being DE-AUTHENTICATED by 阿穆姆’s act of speech. In Line 8, 狻猊 launches an attack against the AD Carry with regard to his observation on her movements. The AD Carry of the team has lost a lot of health due to the enemy pokes, but chooses to hide besides the turret, not going back to the home base to resume her life. 狻猊 is not satisfied with this performance and thus negatively appraises it (Line 13), which is accompanied by the insulting name *baichi*, dirty slang *chao* and *meinao*, as well as sighs of impatience. Regarding this subject, 飛斯 also expresses himself through the chat channel. In Line 11, he sends an emoticon = = to show his speechlessness toward 狻猊’s communicative practice.

After 狻宿's last turn, he addresses 狻宿 as *tongxue* and explains to him what should be the reason the AD Carry did not recall: Because the AD Carry was besieged by the enemy champions, she had no choice but to defend herself under the turret, having no time to recall. As 飛斯 claims that everyone saw what happened at the time of the play (Line 17), his act of speech in Line 16 should be considered an objective descriptive that could effectively support his stance. In this encounter, 狻宿 tries very hard to DE-AUTHENTICATE the AD Carry's identity as a legitimate member of the community. The role 飛斯 plays is to prevent such an identity relation from being established. Later on in the game, 狻宿 shifts his target to 阿母姆:

(55) Game No. 58 (recorded on September 25, 2015) (continued)

- 18 狻宿發出訊號告知所有人敵人消失
yasu fa chu xunhao gaozhi suoyouren diren xiaoshi
 'Yasuo signals that enemies are missing.'
- 19 狻宿 (mid) : 你白癡嗎
ni baichi ma
 'Are you an idiot,'
- 20 JG
 'Jungle?'
- 21 你這樣開大的 ****
ni zheyang kaida de
 'You use your ultimate ability like this.'
- 22 阿母姆 (jungler) : = =失誤一次需要罵人嗎
shiwu yi ci xuyao maren ma
 'Do you really have to blame me for making a single mistake?'
- 23 你沒失誤過?
ni mei shiwu guo
 'Don't you ever make a mistake?'

- 24 飛斯 (top) : 我剛失誤
wo gang shiwu
 ‘I just made a mistake.’
- 25 哈哈
haha
 ‘(Laughing).’
- 26 牙素梅納麼針對人
yasu mei namo zhendui ren
 ‘Yasuo, don’t be this personal in your remarks.’
- 27 別
bie
 ‘Don’t.’
- 28 遊戲
youxi
 ‘It is just,’
- 29 而已
eryi
 ‘A game.’
- [...]
- 30 飛斯標記了馬爾札哈 (敵人)
feisi biaoji le maerzhaha
 ‘Fizz has targeted Enemy Malzahar.’
- 31 飛斯發出訊號告知所有人警戒
feisi fa chu xunhao gaozhi suoyouren jingjie
 ‘Fiss signals to be careful.’
- 32 阿姆姆 (jungler) : 等菲斯
deng feisi
 ‘Wait for Fizz.’
- 33 飛斯 (top) : 他們都 r 我
tamen dou r wo
 ‘They all use their ultimate abilities on me.’
- 34 阿姆姆 (jungler) : 你輸出最高
ni shuchu zui gao
 ‘Because you are the main damage dealer.’
- 35 飛斯 (top) : 牙速屁孩還跳 game
yasu pihai hai tiao game
 ‘Yasuo such a fart kid even logged out the game.’

Lines 19-29 are the exact conversation we have discussed in Excerpt 44, an instance of negative appraisal. 狻猊 directs his attack to the jungler 阿姆姆, who made a mistake using his ultimate ability at a wrong moment. 阿姆姆 and 飛斯 deal with the situation by making comments about 狻猊's communicative practice of complaints or accusations. In the last piece of talk (Lines 30-35), almost all of the team members are preparing for a coming team fight. 阿姆姆 performs a directive to tell others to wait for 飛斯 so that they could fight as a team. At this point, 飛斯 complains about the fact that the enemies like to cast their ultimate abilities (*r*) on him, in response to which 阿姆姆 reasons that it is because 飛斯's damage output is the highest and thereby poses the greatest threat to the enemy team. Out of nowhere, 飛斯 starts to judge 狻猊's behavior so far. He refers to 狻猊 as a *pihai* because of 狻猊's communicative practice of flaming; what's worse, 狻猊 seems to have logged out the game (*tiao game*) on purpose, which is an offensive gesture to the rest of the team members as it would lead to a 4v5 unfair match. 飛斯's name calling of 狻猊 as a *pihai* alludes to the identity relations of both DE-AUTHENTICATION and DISTINCTION. It DE-AUTHENTICATES 狻猊's identity as a mature *LoL* player because *pihai* is a kind of person whose social skills have not been well-developed; DISTINCTION is also obvious because the *pihai* name tag socially meaningfully distinguishes 狻猊 from the rest of the team.

From this excerpt we see another *LoL* player, 狻猊, constantly seeks to suggest the identity relations of AUTHENTICATION of his own claim to *LoL* gamer identity and

DE-AUTHENTICATION as against the others, even though they belong to the same team.

Despite his self-claimed social position, 犛宿 bumps into a similar difficulty as 汎 does in the last excerpt. Instead of going along with 汎's and 犛宿's views, some of their allies argue with them over what the "right" plays or "right" attitudes toward playing the game should be. That is, the knowledge that they display and the ways they display it to construct their gamer identities are not approved by other players, which in turn moves them to the peripheral of the community. With this understanding, we can say that there is only a thin line between the identity categories of *directors* and *flamers*. *Directors* are players whose judgments are convincing enough to make others listen to their plans of actions, while *flamers* are those who make unreasonable accusations and orders and end up having issues with their social standings in their teams. The thing, however, is that the so-called social positions within a group are abstract concepts that only reside in the participants' mind, unable to be entirely told from acts of speech. In other words, the *directors* in the above excerpts could have been *flamers* in the mind of the co-players, who just do not want to flip the table off. This is, again, why some researchers speaking for the framework of community of practice are not happy about the term *identity category*, as identity should be something built upon actual practices and co-constructed with other participants. Now take a look at another possible identity or character emerging in Game No. 58. 阿姆姆 and 飛斯, playing roles of antagonists in 犛宿's ideal world, do not engage in offensive speech against 犛宿

as 露璐 and 李星 do in Game No. 85. Rather, 阿姆姆 and 飛斯 seem to take a rational stance all the time, which can be shown in their moves of analyzing previous plays (Lines 3 and 16), reasonably arguing about what the appropriate communicative practice of a *LoL* player should be (Lines 22-29), and launching a plan for action (Line 32). Their way to AUTHENTICATE their claims to the gamer identity is purely through display of knowledge about the game and how to play it, without any suggestion of DE-AUTHENTICATION pointed to their allies. Within a game chat, they would put a lot of effort in emphasizing the importance of teamwork and negotiation of tactics among team members; sometimes they may try hard to create a positive atmosphere in the group. In the following game chat, a player playing 卡力斯 appears to construct such a persona, as well. Excerpt 56 contains the turns of talk just after the game starts:

(56) Game No. 62 (recorded on October 4, 2015)

- | | | |
|---|----------------|---|
| 1 | 蓋倫 (Top) : | 我先喊 TOP? = =
<i>wo xian han TOP</i>
‘Am I the first one to want Top?’ |
| 2 | 卡力斯 (Jungle) : | 她先 TOP 的
<i>ta xian TOP de</i>
‘He is the first one.’ |
| 3 | | 對
<i>dui</i>
‘Yes.’ |
| 4 | | 然後我喊中
<i>ranhou wo han zhong</i>
‘And then I call Mid.’ |
| 5 | 葵恩 (Mid) : | ???@@ 我完全沒看到有人喊 top |

- wo wanquan mei kan-dao you ren han top*
'I completely do not see anyone calling Top.'
- 6 蓋倫 (Top) : 對阿
dui a
'Yes.'
- 7 好運姐 (AD Carry) : 我有看到ㄟ
wo you kan dao ei
'I saw it.'
- 8 葵恩 (Mid) : 我本來 ad 改喊 top
wo benlai ad gai han top
'Originally I called AD Carry but changed to Top afterwards.'
- 9 蓋倫 (Top) : 沒看到是你家的事
mei kan dao shi ni jia de shi
'It is your business that you didn't see it.'
- 10 卡力斯 (Jungle) : 別納麼兇
bie namo xiong
'Don't be this rude.'
- 11 不然我 JG
buran wo JG
'Would it be better that I play Jungle?'
- 12 蓋倫 (Top) : 不看到不要換物賴拉
bu kan dao bu yao huan wulai la
'Don't falsely accuse others only because you didn't see it.'
- 13 瑟雷西 (Support) : 雙上ㄅ.-
shuang shang be
'Or we can have two top laners.'
- 14 蓋倫 (Top) : 亂
luan
'As you please.'
- 15 瑟雷西 (Support) : 也是有好處的
ye shi you haochu de
'Having two Tops has its own advantage.'
- 16 卡力斯 (Jungle) : 奎恩要 JG?
kuien yao JG
'You want to play Jungle, Quinn?'
- 17 葵恩 (Mid) : 我不太會@@
wo bu tai hui

- 18 瑟雷西 (Support) : ‘I am not good at it.’
 雙上就好ㄅㄅ-.
shuang shang jiu hao ri be
 ‘Two Tops will be fine.’
- 19 卡力斯 (Jungle) : 還是你要終
haishi ni yao zhong
 ‘Or you want to play Mid?’
- 20 葵恩 (Mid) : OK@@
 ‘Okay.’
- 21 謝囉
xie luo
 ‘Thanks.’
- 22 我先幫你打野怪?
wo xian bang ni da yeguai
 ‘Do I have to help you hit the jungle monsters?’
- 23 卡力斯 (Jungle) : NO
 ‘No.’

The very first part of interaction in Game No. 62 is a continued conversation among the team members starting from the chat room during the champion selection countdown. 蓋倫 and 葵恩 have an argument over who called the Top position first and thus could play as the top laner for the team; all of the other three team members are also active in the discussion. The chat log obviously shows, while 葵恩 insists that she did not see anyone asking for Top (Line 5), 卡力斯, and 好運姐 both speak for 蓋倫 that he is supposed to be the first person who claimed Top. Because of this dissention, 蓋倫 even takes an accusatory stance toward 葵恩 (Line 9). Facing this situation, 卡力斯 appeases 蓋倫 (Line 10) and further proposes a way to satisfy both sides of the argument, with the sacrifice on the part of himself (Lines 11, 16, and 19). With 卡力斯’s mediation, 葵恩 finally agrees to play the position

Mid, which leaves the Jungle position to 卡力斯. The stance taking moves we want to focus on here are those of 卡力斯; despite the fact that he chooses a side at first, he does comfort 蓋倫 and solve the situation afterwards. Unlike a lot of *LoL* players who tend to blindly follow what other people say, he can think things and deal with situations more rationally. As a result, a positive atmosphere could possibly be brought to the group by such a stance.

Excerpt 57 is the follow-up chat messages at the game's laning phase:

(57) Game No. 62 (recorded on October 4, 2015) (continued)

- 24 葵恩擊殺了李星（敵人）完成雙殺！
kuien jisha le lixing wancheng shuangsha
'Quinn has slain Enemy Lee Sin for a double kill.'
- 25 卡力斯 (Jungle) : gd
'Good.'
- 26 蓋倫 (Top) : XD
- 27 卡力斯 (Jungle) : 默契不錯~
moqi bucuo
'We are good.'
- 28 加油~
jiayou
'Keep it up.'
- 29 葵恩 (Mid) : :)
- [...]
- 30 安妮（敵人）正在大殺特殺！
anni zhengzai dashatesha
'Enemy Annie is on a killing spree.'
- 31 好運姐 (AD Carry) : 安妮好肥
anni hao fei
'Enemy Annie is so fed up.'
- 32 卡力斯 (Jungle) : 這不能怪誰
zhe bu neng guai shei
'We should not blame anyone for this.'

33	好好打吧 <i>haohao da ba</i> ‘Just try your best to play well.’
34	加油 <i>jiayou</i> ‘Keep it up.’
35	蓋倫 (Top) : SOR ‘Sorry.’
36	我得問題 <i>wo de wenti</i> ‘The problem is on me.’
37	好運姐 (AD Carry) : 沒關 C <i>mei guan C</i> ‘Don’t worry.’
38	還是打得過 <i>haishi da de guo</i> ‘We can still manage to win the game.’

Lines 25-29 are the team members’ responses to one of their winning engagements, where 蓋倫’s and 葵恩’s expressions of positive feelings (Lines 26 and 29) are obviously triggered by 卡力斯’s encouraging words (Lines 25, 27, and 28). This effort to lift others’ spirits of 卡力斯 is carried on to another peace-making situation in the game. Consider the talk starting from Line 30, which we have discussed in Excerpt 38. When the enemy 安妮 is on a killing spree, the team’s AD Carry 好運姐 analyzes the situation by saying that 安妮 has become a great threat to the team. By posting the message, 好運姐 may be implying that she is not happy with the ally who has laned against 安妮, because if it were not for the ally’s incapability of winning the lane, 安妮 would not be this fed up (*fei*). Sensing the threatening tone, 卡力斯 tries to convince 好運姐 that it is their responsibility as a group and should

not be imputed to any individual member. Again we note that 卡力斯 is not easily influenced by emotions of others and can look at things objectively. In a way, 卡力斯 is establishing an identity relation of AUTHENTICATION where he likens himself to a professional *LoL* player who understands that there is no need to break the harmony among team members because displeasure could affect an individual's performance negatively, and that victory can only be achieved through teamwork.

From Excerpts 56 and 57, we seem to be able to gain insight into a third identity category that could possibly emerge from the context of *LoL* gaming, which I will then call *peacemakers*. These players are inclined to extinguish the “flames” that are set off by the *flamers*, or what Taiwanese people call *fart kids* (屁孩). They strive to save others' faces that are exposed to some allies' threat, holding rational stances to maintain unity and integrity within the team and cancel the effect of any DE-AUTHENTICATION against other players during the talk. In the last but not least excerpt below, almost all of the members of the team are *peacemakers*; we want to see if we could get additional information about this identity category.

(58) Game No. 20 (recorded on August 23, 2015)

- 1 敵隊消滅了我方！
didui xiaomie le wofang
'Enemy Team has scored an ace.'
- 2 安妮 (Top) : 0.0
- 3 布里茨 (Support) : 0.

- 4 0.0
- 5 安妮 (Top) : 一半へ
yiban ai
‘A half.’
- 6 厂厂
hehe
‘(Laughing).’
- 7 布里茨 (Support) : 甚麼意思
sheme yisi
‘What does it mean?’
- 8 安妮 (Top) : 總人頭
zongrentou
‘The kills in total.’
- 9 布里茨 (Support) : 11/16
- 10 助攻占真多
zhugong zhan zhen duo
‘I have got a lot of assist kills.’
- 11 黛安娜 (敵人) 正在大殺特殺 !
daianna zhengzai dashatesha
‘Enemy Diana is on a killing spree.’
- 12 安妮 (Top) : ==
- 13 布里茨 (Support) : 。 。 。
- 14 法洛士 (AD Carry) : 這場沒人嘴砲 真開燻 XD
zhe chang mei ren zuipao zhen kaixun
‘No one flames in this match of game. So happy.’
- 15 布里茨 (Support) : 你別亂開治癒啦
ni bie luan kai zhiyu la
‘Don’t you use Heal wrong.’
- 16 雖然是救我
suiran shi jiu wo
‘Although you used it to save my life.’
- 17 法洛士 (AD Carry) : XD
- 18 布里茨 (Support) : 不過你不開我也不會死
buguo ni bu kai wo ye bu hui si
‘But even though you did not use it, I could still survive.’
- 19 加油囉
jiayou luo
‘Keep it up!’

This excerpt clearly shows that, even when the team bumps into some trouble, its members do not seem to pick on or correct each other as if there must be particular individuals who have to be responsible for the bad situations. Starting from the very beginning, 安妮 takes on an emotive stance toward the team's disadvantage (Line 2) which is not negative but only a bit of shock (0.0). She even tries to find pleasure in the misfortune that the number of the team's kills is only a half of the enemies' (Lines 5 and 6). Even though she does use the emoticon of impatience (= =) after the enemy champion 黛安娜 once again gets multiple kills from the allies (Line 12), overall she is not apt to engage in the practices of directives and negative appraisals that many *LoL* players resort to under unfavorable situations. As for the support 布里茨, it seems that he likes to establish ADEQUATION with 安妮's *peacemaker* gamer identity. In Lines 4 and 13, 布里茨 similarly expresses himself with some harmless emoticons. He also analyzes the situation with 安妮 in Lines 9 and 10, where he reflects on his performance of getting a lot of assist kills so far. Although 布里茨 attempts to challenge the AD Carry 法洛士's gameplay skill, specifically the skill of using Heal at the right timing (Line 15), he does hold back his negative appraisal by reasoning that 法洛士 actually used Heal out of goodwill – to rescue his life (Line 16). The words of encouragement *jiayouluo* in Line 19 further suggest that 布里茨 wants to maintain the positive atmosphere in the group. Let's take a look at 法洛士's statement in Line 14 to make

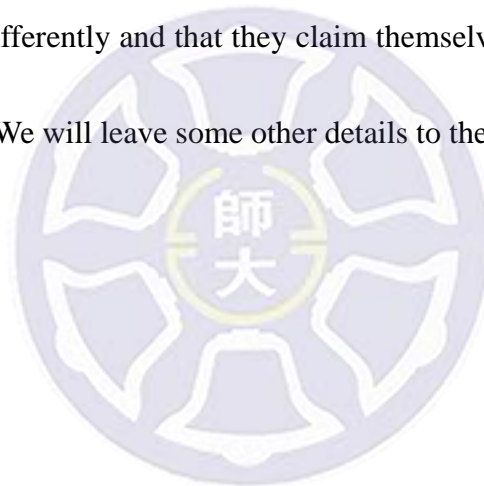
a point. 法洛士 here uses another key word that is closely related to the identity category of *flamer*, that is, *zuipao*. *Zuipao* is a popular youth slang term at the time of conducting this research; it means pretty much the same as *flame* or *troll* in the context of the Internet – to jokingly or seriously insult others by posting provocative messages. The fact that 法洛士 expresses that there has been no flaming in the group chat helps us see the stance that the players in this match of game repetitively take toward the practice of gaming, and more importantly, the distinction between the *LoL* identities of *flamers* and *peacemakers*.

It would be an interesting question to ask whether there is still another identity category that can be found in my conversational data. Actually, one can easily forget that there are totally five players constituting a team in one match of the game, and apparently not all of the players are as active in the chat console as those highlighted in the above passages of discussion. While particular team members like to dominate the talks, there are some others who are reluctant to participate in the chat. Take Game No. 40 (Excerpts 48-51) for example. The Support 布里茨 uses the chat channel to post messages for only one time. That is when his teammate 伊莉絲 gets several kills in a row; he expresses his surprise toward the event via the emoticon @@. The mid laner 卡特蓮娜 of the team, on the other hand, does not even say a word throughout the whole game. It seems that some *LoL* players, like 布里茨 and 卡特蓮娜, do not normally send messages to communicate with their teammates; they only sometimes vocalize themselves by vaguely expressing their feelings toward some

astonishing plays, or respond to others when there are tactical needs. In favor of a well-organized analysis, I tag these players as *inhibitors* to be differentiated from other identity categories. They are so called because most of the time they either stay silent or inhibit themselves from expressing too much emotion or thought. In fact, among the 400 players I played with, there are up to 118 (29.5%) who do not say anything at all or just use some non-verbal cues and alert pings to interact with other players. There of course could be plenty of reasons behind their inhibition, but one that is most relevant to the issue of identity work could be that *inhibitors* do not want to reveal too much about who they are in such a virtual world. To them, online gaming can simply be a leisure activity that is not laden with social and psychological concerns. Crucially, it is also possible that *inhibitors* are more aware than others of the fact that *LoL* is a multimedia interactive platform where texting is just one of the venues for communication. To them, the built-in smart pings and the champions' actual gaming practices (e.g. their movements, use of skill shots, item builds) may be better ways to coordinate tasks in such an intense environment.

In this section we have seen four identities or styles of play in the *LoL* game world, according to the conversational data of 100 random matches of Normal Games. Referring back to the frequencies of use of the five communicative practices I summarize in the last section, we seem to be able to spell out what an interaction among *LoL* players is normally like. That is, since negative appraisals and directives are the most prevalent communicative

practices in the game chat, *directors* and *flamers* may stand for the majority in the *LoL* gamer community. However, according to what we learn about *inhibitors*, that a linguistic study can overlook identity practices not involving the use of language, we should know that *directors* and *flamers* could only represent *LoL* players who care enough to express themselves through the chat channel. Despite all these inferences about who is the core members in the gamer community, we ought to keep in mind that the reality is much more complicated than we think. As the notion of identity is discursively negotiable, chances are that different players define the four identities differently and that they claim themselves to more than one identity within a single game chat. We will leave some other details to the next chapter.



CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEW RESPONSES AND DATA DISCUSSION

The goal of this chapter is to organize what we have learned from the data analysis from the perspective of socio-cultural linguistics, and try to relate it to the previous literature. With the help of my interviews with the ten *LoL* gamers I know in real life, the research questions of interest will be answered, and the present study will be proven to make contribution to the field of concern.

5.1 *League of Legends* gamers as a community of practice (revisited)

Communities of practice are social learning systems where their members participate in ethnographically meaningful social practices and reify what they understand about the community through symbolic artifacts. By doing so they negotiate meaning with others and open their memberships to evaluation (Wenger, 2010). My study has effectively shown that MOBA games, like *LoL*, can create virtual worlds in which the players interact with each other as if they are members of such communities of practice, even though these games, unlike MMORPGs, do not create everlasting spaces where the “inhabitants” develop their reputations, characters, and identities for their social lives. The *LoL* players in my ethnography produce artifacts that seem to reflect what a community has accumulated

through its history of learning, including the expectations of conduct that the players have for each other to proceed with the game and the repertoire of *LoL* specific language competences. This sense of social norms can also be found in the ten interviewees' answers to my question concerning whether they think *LoL* players as a whole is like a small social organization (*shehui tuanti*, 社會團體), that is, whether it is true that only by learning how to play the game from others or one's own experience can he/she be recognized as a member of the group. All of the interviewed players agree with the feeling of collectivity or the presence of a community, and some of them even confirmed that the knowledge about communication with other members using the specialized language could strengthen their sense of belonging to the community. Now, the question is what kinds of access *LoL* players have to the great amount of knowledge about the enterprise of the community. According to my interviewees, they complete their apprenticeship to become core players through both negotiating the meaning of their experience with other members while gaming and exposing themselves to forms of socio-cultural resources that are broadcasted or shared on the Internet:

我那時候，比較認真在研究是在看一些他們比賽的影片或是一些有人在教學的，不管是國內或國外的都有。(Participant 1, recorded on October 26, 2016)

‘At the time, when I started to do some serious research about the game, I watched some videos of competitions among professional *LoL* players and those of instruction on how to play the game. The players were native or foreign professionals.’

網路論壇裡面有，然後再來就是遊戲中的時候，遊戲裡面的一些社會化也會有。
(Participant 5, recorded on October 28, 2016)

‘The socialization of the members takes place through Internet forums and the actual gameplays.’

主要是那時候去看直播看出來的呀，然後或者是去看 PTT 上面的呀。(Participant 6, recorded on October 28, 2016)

‘I become a *LoL* player mainly by watching live streaming videos or information posted on PTT.’

The channels to membership of the community, as identified above, seem to be versatile enough for the players to develop social group cohesiveness in an environment where socialization with others is actually difficult (which will be elaborated later).

5.2 The ostensible marriage between discourse and identity

The primary goal of the present study is to bring out the value of language as a catalyst in the process of meaning making among members of a community of practice, here the *LoL* players. With reference to Bucholtz and Hall’s (2005) indexicality principle (See Section 2.1.2), there could be several kinds of linguistic indices involved in a self-presentation process. Among them, we have noted that the overt mention of identity labels is one of the possible ways for a *LoL* player to negotiate his/her identity with others. This is typically found in a situation where a player negatively appraises his/her teammates because of some previous gameplays. The exact identity categories called out are *pihai* (屁孩), *tongpai* (銅牌),

diduan (低端), *xinshou* (新手), etc., all of which allude to the identity relation of DISTINCTION between the speakers and the addressees because they are ideologically sensitive names that have the power of distinguishing groups of questionable gamers. Besides this indexical process of naming, the intersubjectivity among the *LoL* players is pretty much based on their respective stancetaking moves during the ongoing talks, that is, their “evaluative and epistemic orientations” (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p. 594) to the subject matters under discussion. Even though particular sentence structures and vocabulary may be part of the competence that *LoL* players should possess to secure their memberships, the employment of these linguistic forms, including their use, misuse, and non-use, has never led to major social consequences that come with the co-participants’ follow-up evaluations. To put it another way, the *LoL* players’ deployment of the specialized language is not “controversial” enough to incite any renegotiation of meaning among other participants. The specialized register in the context of *LoL* becomes critical only when it is used to support the speakers’ points of view with regard to the current subjects on how to play the game.⁵⁹

Therefore, a lot of attention should be given to what is going on in the game chat when players exchange their feelings and thoughts with one another, or say, when they are trying to take up relative positions or interactional stances with respect to the contexts of their utterances. This is why we organize the five communicative practices the *LoL* players most

⁵⁹ For example, dirty words tend to be used to support one’s accusatory stance.

frequently participate in by using the chat channel. At first glance, it seems that the practices of tactical reports, expressions of feeling, analyses of in-game situations, comments on previous plays, and plans for future actions are the main channels through which *LoL* players make their alignment moves and build their gamer identities. This argument, however, should not be accepted without reservation. As we discussed before, it has been found out that there are approximately one-fourth of the *LoL* players not “chatting” with their teammates at all during gaming; some respondents of interviews even consider the chat channel unnecessary in the *LoL* game world. As a result, what is examined in the current study regarding the linguistic and communicative practices could say little about the *LoL* players who inhibit themselves from expressing opinions in the chat room, except that certain identity relations might be imposed on them by those who speak to take stances. What we should do, then, is to take a holistic, interactive view to look at the players’ meaning-making processes, instead of narrowing our perspective to just linguistics. MMOGs are multimodal platforms where language, although potentially crucial to identity construction, is only an appurtenance for player interaction.

What we could really learn from the study is, therefore, the relationship between communicative practices and a subgroup identity within the *LoL* community, not the generic gamer identity. As the most frequently performed acts of speech are directives and representatives intended for criticisms, it is reasonable to claim that *LoL* players who use the

chat system tend to take a proactive stance while gaming. They are prone to AUTHENTICATE their own gamer identities and DE-AUTHENTICATE others', to show that they are better players than their allies. This finding corresponds to the previous argument of Adachi and Willoughby (2011) and Hughes and Louw (2013) that competitive games arouse aggression in players' behaviors. *LoL*, as a MOBA game, is competitive because it is designed for players to compete with each other to achieve winning conditions, while, in "cooperative games" such as MMORPGs, players combat with computer-generated opponents only to complete quests for the sake of their characters' progression. The source of MOBA players' aggression may be the fact that they are "personally invested in the outcome of the game" (Hughes & Louw, 2013, p. 259). Especially when the "enemies" are human players, losing the game could lead to the feeling of inferiority, which becomes a threat to one's identity as a competent gamer. What we find interesting in the identity work of *LoL* players active in the game chat is that their want to boost their social images and meanwhile taint others' metaphorically maps to the game objective of beating others and winning for themselves higher places on the Elo rating list. In line with the idea that using the chat channel itself defines an ethnographically specific social role, it is expected that some *LoL* players would psychologically distinguish a group of aggressive players with whom the textual game chat is associated. Indeed, some respondents from my interview, when asked about their attitude toward the allies who speak up in the game chat, immediately think of those using words to

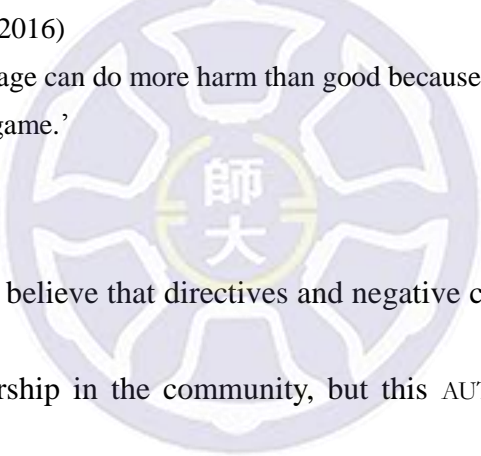
attack others. An important question to ask is, then, that if the aggressive linguistic behavior in the *LoL* game world is a display of a core gamer identity. The answer might be negative according to my informants:

反而能用其他的方式去告知他希望做到的事情會更好，就是比起謾罵，我覺得是更好的。(Participant 1, recorded on October 26, 2016)

‘Compared to scolding, I think it is better that a player express his/her expectation of others’ performances by using other ways.’

在上面的惡意語言是弊大於利，因為畢竟沒有人喜歡玩遊戲被罵。(Participant 5, recorded on October 28, 2016)

‘Players’ offensive language can do more harm than good because no one likes to be scolded while playing a game.’



That is, some players might believe that directives and negative comments are effective ways to claim their core membership in the community, but this AUTHENTICATION may not be recognized and approved by other members. When disapproved, these players are who we categorize as *flamers* in Section 4.4, who deem themselves to be top players knowledgeable about the game, yet only seen as conceited neurotics by other players. If we treat MMOGs as multimodal interactive environments where written text is merely one of the communicative venues among *LoL* players, besides voice pings and screens of gameplay practices, it then goes naturally that investigation into only the chat messages cannot give us the entire picture of the social processes of identity and culture in this community, but just part of it – the part

imbued with aggression and competition over social power.

The foregrounded relation between the in-game communication and *flamers*, instead of the whole group of *LoL* players, seems to undermine the importance of cooperation in *LoL* evident in the chat. Although it might be the case that the cooperative elements in the game are mostly reified through actual participation in the in-game tasks but not through verbal interaction, we also cannot deny that sometimes communicative practices facilitate coordination of responsibilities and in-time actions among teammates. As we mentioned earlier, some of my interviewees affirm that the chat system is not all bad for the teamwork.

Let's look into the exact words they say about this matter:

我覺得那個對話系統算是需要存在的，因為這個遊戲，我覺得蠻需要一個大幅的策略跟他們大家的合作。(Participant 1, recorded on October 26, 2016)

'I think the chat system is necessary for the game because it needs a wide range of tactics and player teamwork to be able to progress.'

默契、經驗，還有遊戲本身的習慣沒有辦法涵蓋整場遊戲的戰鬥……當無法解決問題的時候還是有必要溝通、討論。(Participant 4, recorded on October 27, 2016)

'The entire match of the game cannot be completed simply based on the players' past experience, gameplay habits, and a sense of coordination with each other. Communication or discussion is still needed to solve difficult in-game situations.'

To be more specific, to relate back to my own analysis, the exchange of tactical information (i.e. tactical reports), organized plans for action, and the use of the alert pings are likely to boost the team performance without disrupting the harmony within the group. Because of this,

the dichotomy of cooperative versus competitive gaming environments suggested by previous literature (e.g. Hughes & Louw, 2013) should not be stressed too strongly to be taken as a statistical variable, given that most of the “competitive” games like *LoL* also require a great extent of cooperation for the players to compete against each other, with strategic team plays and matchups of characters. The *LoL* gamer identity is not only constructed on the basis of competitiveness but also a considerable amount of cooperative work.

5.3 The contextualization of identity work

For now we have been focusing on what language-related practices characterize *LoL* players, but this is not enough if we want to detail how the very environment of the *LoL* game world contextualizes player identity. We must also move our eyes to what these players do NOT engage in to construct their identity relations with one another. Here we can finally call up the notion of *negative identity practices* in Bucholtz’s (1999) framework, as long as we compare *LoL* players’ identity practices to those of other MMOGamers’. In Chapter two, we have noted that a lot of studies emphasize the role sociability plays in MMOGs, especially MMORPGs⁶⁰ (e.g. Ducheneaut & Moore, 2005; Seay et al., 2004). This “sociability” is defined in a rather narrow way, referring to the social interaction that is “pursued for its own enjoyment and need produce no extrinsic results” (Ducheneaut & Moore, 2005, p. 96). It is

⁶⁰ Most MMOGs studied before that are said to feature sociability are MMORPGs, including, *EverQuest*, *World of Warcraft*, and *Lineage*.

oftentimes in the form of chitchatting solely aimed for developing one's interpersonal relationship. According to the result of my study, however, such type of sociability is not one of the primary communicative practices in the players' in-game communication; almost all of the speech acts performed by *LoL* players are concerned with matters happening in the game world, not with how to interact with others. This is not at all a surprise as we have already seen about the distinction between MOBA and MMORPGs, or in earlier terms, competitive and cooperative games. The meaning of "living" in the virtual world of any MOBA game is to win a match over a team; in that world the time does not last forever but stops when the match completes. On the other hand, to live in an MMORPG can mean something much more complex. In order to develop a character, the player is encouraged to broaden his/her interpersonal network by making friends⁶¹ with other players and joining "guilds" (officially sanctioned organizations of players). By doing so, they could easily create a group out of characters with complementary skills for an elite quest and thus achieve higher success (e.g. levels, titles, reputation overall) within a shorter period of time. The environment for player interaction in an MMORPG is a persistent world not only consisting of habitats of computer-controlled opponents but also cities or towns with socio-cultural infrastructures of all sorts, which game mechanic provides the gameplay of completing quests of eliminating "the evil" and, equally importantly, socializing with other people in markets, "downtown"

⁶¹ Here "making friends" refers to adding other players to one's friend list, a common feature now in an MMOG.

areas, player associations, etc. Generally speaking, it seems that, compared with MMORPGs, MOBA games such as *LoL* highlight more the “impersonal” dimension of the nature of CMC than the “interpersonal” one, as distinguished by Walther (1996). It means that such game worlds are task-oriented environments where getting the jobs done (i.e. winning the game) is the top priority; some uninhibited and depersonalized language, in the forms of bald-on-record speech acts, should be tolerated there because it could speed up the transmission of strategic information. In a way, these linguistic features are similar to those of emergency calls, which are brief and goal-oriented institutional talks requesting for assistance (e.g. Zimmerman, 1992; Cromdal, 2012). It then follows that the observation of the current study, about *LoL* players’ short but effective messages of tactical reports and suggestions of plans, appears to be reasonable; the politeness that comes with the indirectness of speech (as characterizing interactions among strangers) is sacrificed for clarity and efficiency. In addition to this orientation to goals, there is actually another reason for the reduced personal communication in MOBA games. That is, the concept of “team” in, for example, *LoL*, is a one-shot group that is formed through a random matchup of players; they play together only for one single match, as strangers to each other. This kind of “team” is not so similar to the temporary association of players in MMORPGs, which is treated by their players to be a starting point for future interactions with one another. Now that most *LoL* players of the same team know they are not likely to meet with each other anymore after the particular match,

they might think it is unnecessary to build the foundation of relationships by being nice and polite. Overall speaking, the informants of my interview agree with the relative instrumental game-orientation of player communication in *LoL*:

這個遊戲大家進來就想要獲勝，玩這個遊戲的多數人是想要贏的，而不是來交朋友的感覺。(Participant 2, recorded on October 26, 2016)

‘Everybody enters the game to achieve winning results. Most of the people who play this game want to win, instead of making friends.’

當下的時間點是一個 team，但是過了那個時間點之後就不是一個 team 了這樣子。交朋友有點難，因為就是那個當下而已。(Participant 3, recorded on October 26, 2016)

‘At the point of gaming you are a team with other players, but after that you are not teammates anymore. Making friends is difficult because you are only with each other at the moment.’

The cognitive impact of depersonalization is further augmented by the fact that this game is fast-paced and needs a lot of hands-on control from the keyboard and mouse, as indicated by two other respondents:

因為節奏比較快，基本上空閒時間不會這麼多，除了罵人以外，基本上溝通就會偏簡短的。(Participant 4, recorded on October 27, 2016)

‘Because of the fast pace of the game, basically there is not much free time for players to chat. Except for yelling at each other, the communication among the players tends to be short.’

可能這個遊戲需要的操作比較多，所以沒有那麼多時間聊天。(Participant 7, recorded on November 4, 2016)

‘Maybe because this game takes a lot of effort for players to control the avatars, there is little time for them to chat.’

With the understanding of the virtual world of a MOBA game so far, our finding of *LoL* players’ communicative practice of negative appraisal appears to be explained as well, since many people get anxious and angry easily in such an intense environment, even more so when their allies do something that could potentially cost the team the game. In spite of this, there is one thing that needs further explanation. Although it follows naturally that mistakes get on the nerves of *LoL* players, they should not guarantee that the players spend that much space on the chat window criticizing others’ performances. This is, in fact, where we really have to look back on the relationship between discourse and identity discussed in the last passage. Any representation of reality can never be completely conditioned or contextualized by a given factor; the task-oriented, one-time-only group context does not determine but can only shape the identity that possibly emerges from the current discourse. The communication patterns or the tendencies of using impoliteness linguistic strategies should derive from not only the game design but also the interaction between the players’ cognition and the community’s subculture, which is negotiated with other participants and associated with its own history. While part of the reason for choosing to speak in a rather strong, direct tone is the impersonal group environment, what we have noticed about the pursuit of identity as a

professional and experienced gamer could also be relevant here. My interviewed respondents have similar points of view when asked about people's intentions behind their verbal attacks during gaming:

他們會覺得說，你做到的東西跟我想像中的不一樣，因為我很厲害，所以我想的才是對的，加上他本身在贏的概念上面是很強烈的，所以他自然而然有時候會用一些具攻擊性的方式去命令你，或者去責罵你。(Participant 1, recorded on October 26, 2016)

'They would pay special attention to those performances that do not meet their expectations. Because they think they are very good at this game, their strategies should be better than others'. Adding that these players have great desire to win, they instinctively order others to fulfill some tasks or scold them in an aggressive way.'

當你的隊友不如預期的時候，就會有一種是你們拖累我，我要教訓你們這種感覺。(Participant 4, recorded on October 27, 2016)

'When their teammates do not perform as expected, they would think that they are dragged down by the mass. That is why they want to teach others a lesson.'

貶低別人以達到自己的優越感。(Participant 7, recorded on November 4, 2016)

'They try to achieve a sense of superiority over others by disparaging them.'

The aggressive style of language can help the game chat users present themselves as players who are knowledgeable and sophisticated enough to make firm decisions, sometimes acting strict to their teammates when things do not go well. This argument can be further supported by still another difference between MOBA games and MMORPGs, although it is subtler. That is, the states of "anonymity" in the two types of game world are a little bit different from each

other. The virtual characters controlled by MMORPG players are fixed in their gender roles, races, and even classes once they are created, and the players' accomplishments along the progression such as character levels, awarded titles, and status positions (e.g. guild leader) are mostly visible to others. These unchangeable and transparent social factors can possibly affect a player's use of linguistic politeness mechanisms to communicate with others. In contrast, as we have introduced before, MOBA game players have the opportunities to reselect their avatars (i.e. champions in *LoL*) to compete in different matches of game, which means that their subjectivities or "spirits" do not reside in the same bodies with the given sets of social characteristics. In addition, their performance ratings and other personal information (e.g. the champions that they "major" in, the clans that they belong to) are not directly shown to other players but have to be checked through in-game search engines. Consequently, such games as *LoL* seem to provide better environments for players to claim or, in the case of *flamers*, pretend themselves to be successful gamers, and few would find out if it is true.

All of the above discussion on how the specific context of *LoL* game world mediates between identity and discourse can be very clear when we look at it from the perspective of local identity categories or membership roles. In Bartle's (1996) terms, *achievers* and *killers* seem to be the two player types that dominate the *LoL* game chat, corresponding to, respectively, *directors* and *flamers* I suggest earlier. *Achievers* or *directors* are those who pursue power (both combat power and social power) by achieving game-related objectives

and taking up leadership positions within the community; in my data they perform directives and representatives indicating others' wrongdoings to show their care about the results of the games. On the other hand, *killers* or *flamers* are players who ruin others' joy of playing the game with misbehaviors that provoke emotional responses. This category of *LoL* players, in my ethnography, tends to post inflammatory messages that hint at the addressees' inability to play the game well. Such messages are mostly in the forms of directives telling people what to do and representatives negatively valuing others' gameplays. Here we note that both directives and representatives as negative appraisals are potential identity practices of *directors* and *flamers*, which means that the two identity categories can actually be the same, depending on how the co-participants on the spot evaluate or interpret these communicative practices. Roughly speaking, what *flamers* ask for is more unreasonable and can disrupt the "normal" gaming experience of others; their misbehaviors can go too far to the point where a lot of profanity, which is far from helpful to the in-game situations the players are going through, is used just to upset people. As we have reviewed in Chapter Two, there are at least two more identity categories that might emerge from the virtual world of an MMOG – what Bartle (1996) calls *explorers* and *socializers*. Based on our conversation analysis, these two types of players appear to be minorities or not participate much in the game chat in *LoL*. The reason is obvious: The communication among *LoL* players is mainly for task-oriented purposes; there is little time for anyone to send messages only dedicated to appreciating the

interesting features of the game (*exploring*) or developing friendships with others (*socializing*). If one reviews the literature carefully, he/she could have noticed that previous studies on MMOG player types do not take the genre of MOBA into consideration. In other words, the difference between the results of my study and those of others in relation to culturally specific identity categories is close to the one between, again, the genres of MOBA games and MMORPGs, including MUDs. It is not surprising that *explorers* and *socializers* are not likely to vocalize themselves in MOBA games such environments where “time is money.” According to my interview, there is possibly a simpler categorization of players in *LoL* as a goal-oriented environment:

一種應該就是像我一樣單純就是在玩的，就是休閒型的玩家，就是能多輕鬆就多輕鬆，能不像他們所謂的比賽選手一樣就多不像。再來一種可能就是專業型的，就是他們想要讓自己可以像電視上比賽的那些人那麼厲害，他們相對來講會更在乎輸贏，然後也會想要去看說這場比賽我如果輸了對我接下來會有什麼影響。我可能再分一區就是中間介在兩者之間，他是來尋求刺激的，但是他不要像那種刁鑽的比賽型玩家一樣，他是想要來尋求一些快感。(Participant 1, recorded on October 26, 2016)

‘One type of players, leisure gamers, simply enjoys the fun of the game, like me. They play to relax, not comparing themselves to those competition professionals. Another type may be professional players; they look up to the players who compete on the TV, care more about wins or losses, and think about the consequences of losing the game. I may distinguish still another type of players that is in the middle of the two types I mentioned. Such players come to pursue excitement, but they do not want to be too picky about the gameplays like those professional gamers.’

第一就是完全休閒型玩家，就是想怎麼玩就怎麼玩，像 Siv HD 那一類的玩家。還有一種就是跟他完全相反，就是很想要贏的那一種。還有的就是玩的時候會認真，但是沒有到像那一些人這麼投入，就是覺得輸了會可惜，但是不會覺得真的那麼在意。(Participant 5, recorded on October 28, 2016)

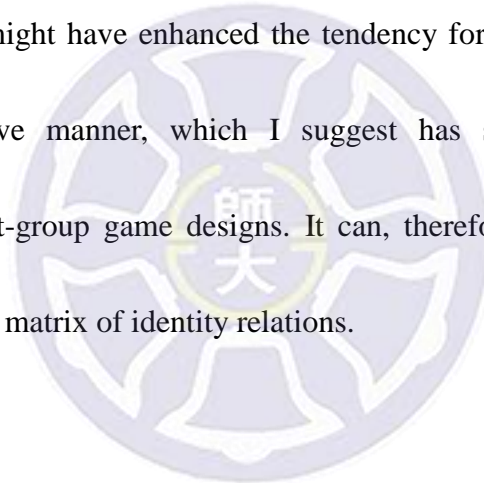
‘The first type is leisure gamers like Siv HD; they follow their heart to play the game. Another type is opposed to the first type; these players really want to win the game. Still another type refers to those who take the game seriously and would feel sorry when losing it, but not too immersed into the world to make a big deal out of it.’

This categorization obviously derives from the competitive game design we discussed before; it comes with the belief that there must be some players who are concerned about the result of a game all the time and some others simply see gaming as something fun to do. The most used category labels for the two poles of players are *power gamers* and *casual gamers*, as discussed in some urban dictionaries and previous studies (e.g. Taylor, 2003; Nardi & Harris, 2006). With reference to my observation in this study, *power gamers* can be both *directors* and *flamers*, as they both show their concern with the “rules” of playing the game. *Casual gamers*, on the other hand, could be *peacemakers* and *inhibitors*, who think it is unnecessary to be so emotionally invested in the leisure activity of online gaming; that is why they may choose to extinguish the “flames” set off by others or refuse to express themselves through the game channel.

For now, in response to my research questions raised in Section 1.2, we have already dealt with how the mechanics of MOBA games mold the construction of identity of *LoL* players. Even though the context of the MOBA genre entails the characteristics of CMC and

MMOGs in general, we still need to highlight part of my findings where the identity practices of *LoL* players are related to the nature of CMC and MMOGs as a broader community. The most obvious point to make in this regard is the use of the specialized vocabulary that can trace its roots in other Internet media sources, including other genres of MMOGs. As we noted in Section 2.2, the use of slang words particular to CMC and MMOGs in general can be treated as an identity practice of a *LoL* gamer, since it gives the readers a sense that at least the speakers have relevant experience in the field of online activities. We can also learn from these lexical items that the identity work of the *LoL* players is always framed within an environment where there is no face-to-face nonverbal cue, and the efficiency in speech production is important. That is why *LoL* players would employ the quasi-nonverbal slang terms and reduced word forms. Let's now direct our attention to just MMOG jargons not specific to the *LoL* game world. We do notice the use of social labels like *xinshou* (新手) and *gaoduan* (高端) in my conversational data, which suggests that *LoL* players, like those of other MMOGs, believe in the ideological dichotomy of newbies and old-timers, or novices and experts. This observation fits quite well into our earlier finding about the regime of competence of the community of *LoL* gaming; because the distinction between a *xinshou* and a *laoshou* (老手) is based on how much knowledge a person has about the game, it emerges naturally from a society where such competence is emphasized. The fact that the most frequently performed communicative practices are related to gameplay strategies and tactics

furthermore shows the rich meaning of being a *xinshou* or *laoshou*. In this respect, one could even infer from the result of my study that the ideology of newbie versus old-timer categorization is more influential in the community of *LoL* gaming than those of other genres of MMOGs. Besides the specialized vocabulary, we want to stress the inherent hyperpersonal nature of CMC (Walther, 1996) for our last argument. That is, as reviewed in Chapter Two, the virtual space of the Internet out there is already an environment where users could keep the state of anonymity and have few social context cues to refer to while interacting with each other. This CMC setting might have enhanced the tendency for *LoL* players to behave in a disinhibited and aggressive manner, which I suggest has something to do with the goal-oriented and one-shot-group game designs. It can, therefore, be said to facilitate the process of formation of the matrix of identity relations.



CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This chapter wraps up the journey to the community of *LoL* gaming by summarizing the main arguments for the intersubjective relations among *LoL* gamers, underscoring the significance of my findings, and outlining the limitations of the study, which leads up to the future directions of research in the field.

6.1 Summary of the study

When entering into the virtual world of *LoL*, one recognizes him/herself as a *LoL* gamer by engaging in the practice of gaming. The gamer identity is a collective concept, as it is inseparable from the ideology of a virtual community, with its idiosyncratic socio-cultural history. The present study looks into this informal learning organization particularly through the lens of linguistics, claiming that communication of any sorts is an important resource for a community of practice to pursue an enterprise. We outline the linguistic repertoire of the community of *LoL* gaming into two aspects: linguistic practices and communicative practices. While they both reflect the indigenous context (e.g. that *LoL* is a task-oriented environment) wherein the ethnographically specific identities or membership roles are constructed, it is through communicative practices that the building of identity relations among participants is


truly facilitated. The study highlights the stancetaking moves suggested in the in-game chat messages posted by members of *LoL* one-shot player teams and takes them as one of the active processes of negotiation of meaning (i.e. negotiation of identity relations) in the community. The result shows that appraisals of previous plays and plans for future actions are the two main types of social practices that enable the development of the community's joint enterprise. While this result seems to show that such aggressive behaviors as giving commands to and reprimanding others are what make *LoL* gamers who they are, a closer look into the co-participants' evaluations of those competitive speech acts and more "inhibited" social actions tells a different story. The participation in the textual interaction during *LoL* gameplay may have defined a subgroup of a gamer type within the *LoL* community as a broader social landscape. Despite that, these players are who make the learning system dynamic and worthy of investigation.

The study has properly answered the four research questions raised in Chapter One, each of which will be restated below, together with our answer to it:

1. Can the *LoL* community be regarded as a community of practice? If yes, how?

The virtual community of *LoL* could be seen as a community of practice thanks to its members' mutual engagement in *LoL* gaming, which creates opportunities for their negotiation of the valued enterprises and shared register. Specifically, the *LoL* players are

fully aware of sets of norms of conduct that bind them together; while some norms of practices regulate the performance of the whole group, others are specific to particular team positions, champion roles, or even individual champions. These communal practices could be traced back to the past gameplay experience of those professional or high-ranked players, who represent the community's historically authentic gamer identities. The language used in the game chat may also be a piece of evidence for the sense of community of practice; it is a form of artifacts that reifies the community's joint enterprise, which opens up important issues for our study.

- 
2. How or through what linguistic forms and functions is membership in the *LoL* community of practice indexed?

Within the register of conversation during gaming, linguistic levels of morpho-syntax and lexicon take on major importance in self-presentation as a *LoL* gamer. The use of truncated syntactic structures, as well as an abundance of ethnographically meaningful slang terms, seems to suggest that *LoL* gamer identity could be an integrated one – one that is more likely to belong to younger generations, in the modern era. Besides morpho-syntax, the level of pragmatic processes is also revealing of the intersubjectivity of *LoL* players. It is found that they take a proactive stance to historicize their membership in the community through display of evaluative or epistemic orientations to the ongoing talk. In particular, tactical reports,

expressions of feelings, analyses of the current situations, appraisals of previous plays, and plans of actions such speech activities are where the negotiation of identity relations most frequently takes place.

3. How do the features of CMC, virtual community of online gaming, and the game mechanics of MOBA contribute to the emergence of *LoL* gamer identity, as revealed through textual interaction during gameplay?

The entire process of identity construction is framed within the *LoL* game world, which entails the contextual characteristics of cyberspace, MMOG, and MOBA. As a text-based Internet platform, with limited nonverbal social cues, *LoL* pushes its players to seek other channels for better communication and self-presentation, such as the use of graphical substitutes for body language in the text messages. As an MMOG, *LoL* politicizes gameplay strategies and the ideological issue of newbies versus old-timers in players' linguistic negotiation of their identity relations, although its multimodality could suggest that the game chat is not absolutely vital for a player to claim his/her gamer membership. As a MOBA game, *LoL* is designed in favor of goal-oriented, but not interpersonal, player interaction, considering its one-shot-group matchmaking system, fast-paced style of gameplay, and the difficulty of multitasking (i.e. chatting while gaming). Since the "goal" is to win the game, it becomes unavoidable that *LoL* players construct their personas on the basis of competitive

language. The kind of anonymity of MOBA mechanics even allows the participants to maximize their personal potential as members of the community.

4. What are the possible ethnographically specific membership roles in the virtual community of practice *LoL*? How are they interactionally achieved?

According to our conversational data, possible ethnographically specific gamer roles that emerge in the community include *directors*, *flamers*, *peacemakers*, and *inhibitors*. The four identity categories, though impossible to be strictly defined, could be distinguished when encountering each other in the game chat. While *directors*, *flamers*, and *peacemakers* strive to associate themselves with former successful players through vocalizing their thoughts, *inhibitors* refuse to be seriously involved in the imbroglios. *Directors* and *flamers* both perform condescending speech acts in pursuit of social power, but those of *flamers* are interpreted as provocations. *Peacemakers* are players who try to contain the flames that may cause a breakdown of teamwork or take a leisurely attitude toward the result of the game.

6.2 Significance of the study

The study holds itself as one of the few endeavors to explore the social mechanism of a competitive MMOG like *LoL*. It breaks the common belief that MOBA games are not serious places for social learning, providing evidence where one's identity is a matter of

intersubjectivity that bases its existence on a social community. What's more, the study presents the gamer identity work of MMOG players in "this generation." *LoL*, as one of the most popular MMOGs in 2010s, has revolutionized the ideology for online gaming. In the online battle arena people do not sit and chill as they do in old time MMORPGs but focus mostly on instrumental goals, which suggests that there is a newly arising matrix of identity relations among the recent MMOG players. All the mind games of how to use and recognize interpersonal influence strategies while coordinating teamwork with others prove that MOBA games like *LoL* can, too, serve as an identity workshop in which players learn to negotiate with themselves by expressing their wants from others and from the world. To the players who use the game chat frequently, MMOGaming may not be a leisure activity but, conversely, a serious one which involves exercises of leading a plan, gaining compliance, handling interpersonal conflict, etc., a project of both cooperation with others and competition for stances in a cultural institution.

This study also makes contribution to the field by facilitating dialogue on issues covered in prior literature. Firstly, I demonstrate what the concept of identity should be like in the zeitgeist of postmodernism – a nonessential sense of unity constituted by coherent, yet sometimes conflicting, self-presentation acts. Though called identity categories, the membership roles proposed in my research such as *directors*, *flamers*, *peacemakers*, and *inhibitors* are not pre-given social realities but need to be built up through repeated

stancetaking moves and negotiated with other participants. These interactionally emerging identities serve empirical evidence for the taxonomy of player types that previous researchers (e.g. Bartle, 1996; Yee, 2002) have observed in questionnaire surveys and forum discussion about why people play MMOGs. Secondly, the study has shown that Bucholtz and Hall's (2004, 2005) tactics of intersubjectivity framework fits in the very context of *LoL* as a virtual community of practice; importantly, it assists me to highlight the ongoing process of intersubjectivity using precise vocabulary. However, as we have seen in the case of my redefinition of DENATURALIZATION, the tactics of intersubjectivity may sometimes need to be realized in a more specific way to be able to shed light on the many possibilities of identity relations. Lastly, my study juxtaposes itself with earlier works on youth slang, Internet language, and other communities of practice (e.g. Labov, 1992; Crystal, 2006) for witnessing the possibility of social change. Consider the *LoL* jargons of *GG*, *lei* (雷), and *OP* listed in Table 7, which have recently become popular slang terms among youngsters. From these neologies we can learn not only how people respond to the conditions of their virtual world but also how they may bring their ways of thinking in dealing with virtual realities into their real life.

6.3 Limitations and suggestions for future research

Every piece of research work has limitations that could restrict the extent to which its

findings are generalized. Those of the current study are related to the ways I delimit the scope of my data collection. First of all, the data source only includes Normal Game and do not cover another major game mode, Ranked Game, in *LoL*. This methodological design may reinforce an overvalued importance of a potential type of players who only play Normal Game but not the supposedly more intense Ranked Game for Elo rating. Second, at the time of the research, voice communication such as conference calling or person-to-person calling has become more popular than before, but this channel of player interaction is left behind in here. Although there is little chance that the randomly matched Normal Game players use voice chat programs in the game, this possibility can bring about interesting phenomena in relation to the issue of identity at hand. Lastly, the performances of the participants in the recorded one hundred games (both their kill scores in the particular matches and overall ladder rankings rated by Elo) are not available for consideration to be a contextual factor that affects their linguistic behaviors on the chat window. That is, it is possible that those who have achieved more in the game feel more power to express themselves in the chat. These limitations serve as some reference points for future research that hopes to devote itself to the subject of *LoL* gamer identity as interactionally negotiated in a social community.

Despite the above mentioned, the research designs yet allow the study to be more focused and in-depth in terms of the discussion of its data within limited pages, not intervened by too many questionable contextual factors. From a big-picture point of view, the

study also enlightens future research as to the relationship between discourse and identity in a socially unpromising environment, compatibility between the community of practice theory and a virtual MMOG world as an ethnographic field, anthropological comparison between MMORPGs and MOBA or ARTS games, and so on.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adachi, P. J. C., & Willoughby, T. (2011). The effect of video game competition and violence on aggressive behavior: Which characteristic has the greatest influence? *Psychology of Violence, 1*(4), 259-274.
- Althusser, L. (1971). Ideology and ideological state apparatuses. In L. Althusser (Ed.), *Lenin and philosophy and other essays* (pp. 121-176). London: New Left Books.
- Austin, J. L. (1962). *How to do things with words*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Barrett, R. (1999). Indexing polyphonous identity in the speech of African American drag queens. In M. Bucholtz, A. C. Liang, & L. A. Sutton (Eds.), *Reinventing identities* (pp. 313-331). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bartle, R. (1996). *Hearts, clubs, diamonds, spades: Players who suit MUDs*. Retrieved from <http://www.mud.co.uk/richard/hcds.htm>
- Baym, N. K. (1998). The emergence of on-line community. In S. Jones (Ed.), *CyberSociety 2.0. Revisiting computer-mediated communication and community* (pp. 35-68). London: Sage.
- Benwell, B., & Stokoe, E. (2006). *Discourse and identity*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Bielaczyc, K., & Collins, A. (1999). Learning communities in classrooms: A reconceptualization of educational practice. In C. Reigeluth (Ed.), *Instructional-design theories and models: A new paradigm of instructional theory* (Vol. 2, pp. 269-292). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Brown, B., & Bell, M. (2004). CSCW at play: 'There' as a collaborative virtual environment. *Proceedings of the 2004 ACM conference on Computer supported cooperative work* (pp. 350-359).
- Bruckman, A. (1992). Identity workshop: Emergent social and psychological phenomena in text-based virtual reality. Retrieved from <ftp://ftp.lambda.moo.mud.org/pub/MOO/papers>
- Bucholtz, M. (1999). Why be normal?: Language and identity practices in a community of nerd girls. *Language in Society, 28*(2), 203-223.

- Bucholtz, M., & Hall, K. (2004). Theorizing identity in language and sexuality research. *Language in Society*, 33(4), 469-515.
- Bucholtz, M., & Hall, K. (2005). Identity and interaction: A sociocultural linguistic approach. *Discourse Studies*, 7(4-5), 585-614.
- Butler, J. (1997). *The psychic life of power: Theories in subjection*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Cartwright, R. L. (1968). Some remarks on essentialism. *The Journal of Philosophy*, 65(20), 615-626.
- Collister, L. B. (2006). *Virtual discourse structure: An analysis of conversation in World of Warcraft* (Master's thesis, University of Pittsburgh). Retrieved from http://etd.library.pitt.edu/ETD/available/etd-06022008-142543/unrestricted/collister-mathesis2008-virtual_discourse_structure_1.pdf
- Crawford, S. P. (2004). Who's in charge of who I am? Identity and law online. *New York Law School Law Review*, 49, 211-229.
- Cromdal, J. (2012). Conversation analysis and emergency calls. In C. Chapelle (Ed.), *The encyclopedia of applied linguistics* (pp. 1-4). Oxford, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Crystal, D. (2006). *Language and the Internet*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.
- Culpeper, J. (1996). Towards an anatomy of impoliteness. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 25, 349-367.
- Davies, B., & Harré, R. (1990). Positioning: The discursive construction of selves. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behavior*, 20, 43-63.
- DeCapua, A. (1998). *Complaints: A comparison between German and English* (Unpublished manuscript). Concordia College, New York.
- Deleuze, G. (2001). *Pure immanence: Essays on a life*. New York: Zone Books.
- Du Bois, J. W. (2007). The stance triangle. In R. Englebretson (Ed.), *Stancetaking in discourse: Subjectivity, evaluation, interaction* (pp. 139-182). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Ducheneaut, N., & Moore, R. J. (2005). More than just 'XP': Learning social skills in massively multiplayer online games. *Interactive Technology & Smart Education*, 2,

89-100.

Eble, C. (1996). *Slang and sociability*. London and Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Eckert, P. (1989). *Jocks and Burnouts: Social categories and identity in the high school*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Eckert, P. (2000). *Linguistic variation as social practice*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Eckert, P. (2012). Three waves of variation study: The emergence of meaning in the study of sociolinguistic variation. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 41, 87-100.

Englebretson, R. (Ed.) (2007). *Stancetaking in discourse: Subjectivity, evaluation, interaction*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Fairclough, N. (2005). Peripheral vision: Discourse analysis in organization studies: The case for critical realism. *Organization Studies*, 26(6), 915-939.

Foucault, M. (1972). *The archaeology of knowledge*. London: Tavistock Publications.

Friedline, B. E., & Collister, L. B. (2012). Constructing a powerful identity in World of Warcraft: A sociolinguistic approach to MMORPGs. In G. A. Voorhees, J. Call, & K. Whitlock (Eds.), *Dungeons, dragons, and digital denizens: The digital role-playing game* (pp. 194-218). New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

Garcia, A. C., & Jacobs, J. B. (1999). Eyes of the beholder: Understanding the turn-taking system in quasi-synchronous computer-mediated communication. *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, 32(4), 337-369.

Geertz, C. (1973). Thick description: Toward an interpretive theory of culture. In M. Martin, & L. C. McIntyre (Eds.), *Readings in the philosophy of social science* (pp. 213-232). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press

Gibson, W. (1984). *Neuromancer*. New York: Ace Books.

Giddens, A. (1991). *Modernity and self-identity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Goffman, E. (1974). *Frame analysis*. New York: Harper and Row.

Goffman, E. (1981). *Forms of talk*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

- Goodwin, C. (2006). Retrospective and prospective orientation in the construction of argumentative moves. *Text and Talk*, 26(4/5), 443-461.
- Hall, S. (2000). Who needs 'identity'? In P. du Gay, J. Evans, & P. Redman (Eds.), *Identity: A reader* (pp. 15-30). London: Sage.
- Harré, R., & van Langenhove, L. (Eds.) (1999). *Positioning theory*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Herring, S. (Ed.) (1996). *Computer-mediated communication*. Amsterdam, The Netherlands and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Benjamins.
- Herring, S. (1999). Interactional coherence in CMC. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 4(4).
- Hine, C. (2000). *Virtual ethnography*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Hollway, W. (1984). Gender difference and the production of subjectivity. In J. Henriques, W. Hollway, C. Urwin, C. Venn, & V. Walkerdine (Eds.), *Changing the subject. Psychology, social regulation, and subjectivity* (pp. 227-263). London: Methuen.
- Hughes, M., & Louw, J. (2013). The salience of social cues and group norms in eliciting aggressive behavior. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 43(2), 252-262.
- Jaffe, A. (Ed.) (2009). *Stance: Sociolinguistic perspectives*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Jakobsson, M., & Taylor, T. L. (2003). The Sopranos meets EverQuest: Social networking in massively multiplayer online games. *Proceedings of DAC 2003* (pp. 81-90).
- Jay, T. (1992). *Cursing in America: A psycholinguistic study of dirty language in the courts, in the movies, in the schoolyards, and on the streets*. Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Jay, T. (2000). *Why we curse: A neuro-psycho-social theory of speech*. Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Kádár, Z. K., & Haugh, M. (2013). *Understanding politeness*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kiesler, S., Siegel, J., & McGuire, T. W. (1984). Social psychological aspects of computer-mediated communication. *American Psychologist*, 39, 1123-1134.
- Kiesling, S. F. (2009). Style as stance: Stance as the explanation for patterns. In A. Jaffe (Ed.), *Stance: Sociolinguistic perspectives* (pp. 171-194). New York: Oxford University Press.

- Kissine, M. (2013). *From utterances to speech acts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kowert, R., & Oldmeadow, J. (2012). *The stereotype of online gamers: New characterization or recycled prototype?* Paper presented at Nordic DiGRA: Games in Culture and Society conference, Tampere, Finland.
- Labov, T. (1992). Social and language boundaries among adolescents. *American Speech*, 67(4), 339-366.
- Labov, W. (1966). *The social stratification of English in New York City*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Laclau, E. (1990). *New reflections on the revolution of our time*. London: Verso.
- Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lea, M., & Spears, R. (1992). Paralanguage and social perception in computer-mediated communication. *Journal of Organizational Computing*, 2, 321-342.
- Ljung, M. (2011). *Swearing: A cross-cultural linguistic study*. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Mason, B. (1999). Issues in virtual ethnography. In K. Buckner (Ed.), *Proceedings of the Esprit i3 workshop on ethnographic studies* (pp. 61-69). Edinburgh: Queen Margaret College.
- Mead, G. H. (1934). *Mind, self, and society*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Murphy, B., & Neu, J. (1996). My grade's too low: The speech act set of complaining. In S. M. Gass, & J. Neu (Eds.), *Speech acts across cultures: Challenges to communication in a second language* (pp. 191-216). Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Nardi, B., & Harris, J. (2006). Strangers and friends: Collaborative play in World of Warcraft. *CSCW '06 Proceedings of the 2006 20th anniversary conference* (pp. 149-158).
- Ochs, E. (1992). Indexing gender. In A. Duranti, & C. Goodwin (Eds.), *Rethinking context: Language as an interactive phenomenon* (pp. 335-358). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ochs, E. (1996). Linguistic resources for socializing humanity. In J. J. Gumperz, & S. C. Levinson (Eds.), *Rethinking linguistic relativity* (pp. 407-437). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Pallof, R., & Pratt, K. (1999). *Building learning communities in cyberspace: Effective strategies for the online classroom*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Piaget, J. (1950). *The psychology of intelligence*. New York: Routledge.
- Rheingold, H. (1993). *The virtual community: Homesteading on the electronic frontier*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Searle, J. R. (1976). A classification of illocutionary acts. *Language in Society*, 5(1), 1-23.
- Seay, A. F., Jerome, W. J., Lee, K. S., & Kraut, R. E. (2004). Project massive: A study of online gaming communities. *Proceedings of CHI 2004* (pp. 1421-1424).
- Sifianou, M. (1999). *Politeness phenomena in England and Greece. A cross-cultural perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Smith, P. (1988). *Discerning the subject*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Solomon, A. (2004, July 10). The closing of the American book. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2004/07/10/opinion/the-closing-of-the-american-book.html?_r=0
- Steinkuehler, C. A. (2004). Learning in massively multiplayer online games. *ICLS '04 Proceedings of the 6th International Conference on Learning Sciences* (pp. 521-528).
- Steinkuehler, C. A. (2006). Massively multiplayer online video gaming as participation in a discourse. *Mind, Culture, and Activity*, 13(1), 38-52.
- Steinkuehler, C. A. (2008). . Cognition and literacy in massively multiplayer online games. In J. Coiro, M. Knobel, C. Lankshear, & D. Leu. (Eds.), *Handbook of research on new literacies* (pp. 611–634). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Squire, K., & Johnson, C. (2000). Supporting distributed communities of practice with interactive television. *Educational Technology Research and Development*, 48(1), 23-43.
- Tajfel, H. (1982). *Social identity and intergroup relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. (1986). The social identity theory of intergroup behavior. In S. Worchel, & W. G. Austin (Eds.), *Psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 7-24). Chicago: Nelson.
- Taylor, C. (1989). *Sources of the self: The making of modern identity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

- Taylor, T. L. (2003). Power gamers just want to have fun?: Instrumental play in a MMOG. *Proceedings of the 2003 DiGRA International Conference* (pp. 300-311).
- Tobin, T. (1972). An approach to black slang. *American Speech*, 47(1/2), 151-155.
- Trudgill, P. (1974). *The social differentiation of English in Norwich*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Turkle, S. (1994). Constructions and reconstructions of self in virtual reality: Playing in the MUDs. *Mind, Culture, and Activity*, 1(3), 158-167.
- Turkle, S. (1995). *Life on the screen: Identity in the age of the Internet*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Walther, J. B. (1992). Interpersonal effects in computer-mediated interaction: A relational perspective. *Communication Research*, 19, 52-90.
- Walther, J. B. (1996). Computer-mediated communication: Impersonal, interpersonal, and hyperpersonal interaction. *Communication Research*, 23, 3-43.
- Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. New York: Cambridge University.
- Wenger, E. (2010). Communities of practice and social learning systems: The career of a concept. In C. Blackmore (Ed.), *Social learning systems and communities of practice* (pp. 179-198). London: Springer.
- Wood, A. F., & Smith, M. J. (2005). *Online communication: Linking technology, identity, and culture*. London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Yee, N. (2002). *Facets: 5 motivation factors for why people play MMORPGs*. Retrieved from <http://www.nickyee.com/facets/home.html>
- Zimmerman, D. H. (1992). Achieving context: Openings in emergency calls. In G. Watson, & R. Seiler (Eds.), *Text in context: Contributions to ethnomethodology* (pp. 35-51). London, England: Sage.