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The perception of Russian players and language in Counter Strike: Global Offensive

Bachelor's Diploma Thesis

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I declare that I have worked on this thesis independently,
using only the primary and secondary sources listed in the bibliography.

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Author's signature

I would like to thank doc. Mgr. Jan Chovanec, Ph.D. for his patience and all my colleagues, who were willing to help me clarifying the thesis for readers, who might not be familiar with video game online communities.

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The perception of Russian players and language in Counter Strike: Global Offensive

Introduction

The community of the online video game Counter Strike: Global Offensive (CS:GO) consists of players from all over the world. And even though it is available in twenty-five languages, the player base follows the real world and uses the lingua franca of today – English. But not everyone is willing or able to speak it as the level of English differs significantly in European countries. Especially in Russia and other CIS countries, with a significant Russian speaking population, are very bad in comparison to other European countries and it may end up creating misunderstandings and tension between players. The tension between East and West must not be omitted and what was earlier shared through classical media, schools or other social media is now spread upon the younger generations, which is easily influenced, through video games and internet in general.

The main goal of this thesis is to determine in what ways is the perception of CS:GO Russian community influenced by the communication channels, what are the main themes and stereotypes and what role plays intertextuality.

Still, it is the process of communication and especially the language, both oral and written that is the main vehicle and indicator of what is going on in this video game community. Online gaming communities of today represent a new world, world that connects people from all around the globe that until now were not and could not be in contact. Different cultures and traditions meet thanks to electronic devices; channels, that shape the communication in new ways. In the scope of this world, the players interact, cooperate and fight against each other. Language is important in this case, because it is basically the only means of finding out something about the person one is playing with. Therefore, we

claim that linguistic methods and theories are appropriate tools in understanding the rules and principles of the online video gaming phenomenon. There are two basic environments where the language of video game players can be studied. Firstly, it is the communication inside the particular game, such as in-game chat (typed or spoken). Secondly, we can monitor and analyse the activities of players on the internet, outside the particular game; the examples of these would be specialized websites, Facebook groups, or YouTube channels. In the scope of this thesis, we will try to cover both these environments

1) Theory

1.1) The Viscous "circle"

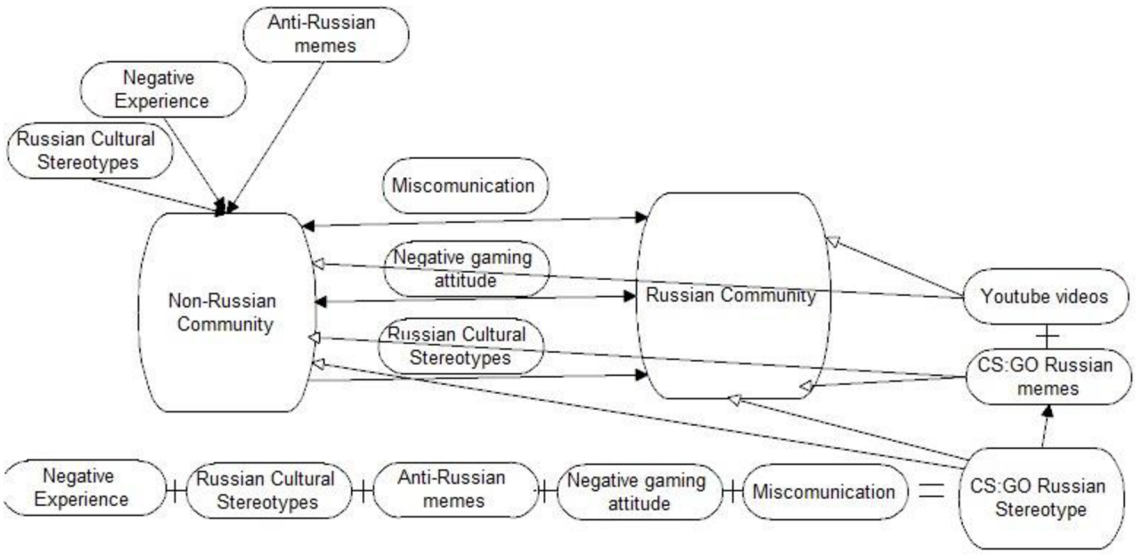

Figure 1. Viscous "circle"

The perception of Russians in CS:GO is based on communication. We must imagine the Non-Russian part of the community and its Russian counterpart as shown in Figure 1. Let us assume that it takes place on the day one of CS:GO. The Non-Russian community starts with three things. Number one is a negative experience with Russian players from previous games. Number two is the Russian cultural stereotype, which is very similar for over a hundred years. And Number three are general Russian memes. On the other side there is the Russian Community. The communities start to communicate in

game and more problems appear. Issue number one is the miscommunication based on inability to understand each other properly or unwillingness to communicate at all. Problem number two is a negative gaming attitude, which may be based on the miscommunication or just player's personal things like mood etc. On the non-Russian Side, it all strengthens the stereotypes until a new CS:GO player stereotype is created. Once it is done it returns to communities and since the non-Russian community has acknowledged the idea of Russian player it starts creating memes and YouTube videos. Those are once again returned into the Communities with two main goals, to entertain and to educate the Russians to play better.

1.2) Intertextuality

The number of connections in between the particular parts of the studies problem leads to the possibility to study the issues according to intertextuality. Intertextuality is one of the key concepts of current literary theory, but it is hard to fully define its extend. The term itself has been created by the French-Bulgarian philosopher Julia Kristeva in the 1960s. Kristeva's theory reflects the Saussure's theory and his opinion, that signs gain their meaning through structure in a particular text. She therefore stated her opinion on that matter that readers of a certain texts are always influenced by other texts they read before. (Allen, 2000) Intertextuality is widely defined as a shaping of a text's meaning by another text. In other words, it is the connection between related literary texts, but it can be also widened to broader artistic creations ad well as common speech.

1.3) Intertextuality through stereotypes

According to Kubilay Aktulum, the stereotypes are a part of the process of intertextuality as a "smallest form of intertextuality". (Aktulum, 2017) In this thesis we work with three groups of stereotypes. The stereotype of Russian,

stereotype of CS:GO player and stereotype of CS:GO Russian player. Stereotype can be defined as "A pre-conceived and frozen image of the things and beings that the individual receives from his social environment; ". (Aktulum, 2017)

1.4) Allusion

Allusion is a figure of speech included in intertextuality. As Montgomery et. al. suggests. "An 'allusion' occurs when one text makes an implicit or explicit reference to another text. (Martin Montgomery ... [et al.]., 2006) In an explicit verbal allusion an actual quotation is made and signalled with quotation marks. In an implicit verbal allusion, no signal is given, and the original wording is sometimes changed to suit the new context."(Martin Montgomery ... [et al.]., 2006) In our context It can be also be connected with reference of an action. For example, in the CS:GO after killing an enemy the killer goes to the corpse and repeatedly crouches and stands up again. This refers to a way to show disrespect in FPS games called 'teabagging', which roots from "the insertion of one man's sack into another person's mouth. Used as practical joke or prank, when performed on someone who is asleep, or as a sexual act." (Bondi, 2017) . In some games when it is impossible to crouch the same activity can be done by jumping above the corpse.

1.5) Parody

Parody is an imitation of style of a particular text or artistic work for comic effect. According to Montgomery et. al. It can be seen as "a way in which intertextuality occurs specifically through genre." (2006) In this thesis we are examining parodies of famous songs. For example, a song "hello from the ruski side", which is inspected further in the text, uses the song to connect feelings like sadness and hopelessness to the topics one is singing about.

1.6) Internet memes

An internet meme is a phenomenon, which is "most commonly used to describe certain kinds of information disseminated among the Internet users by themselves." (Juza, 2013). The memes can include pictures, animations, texts, quotes and great many other things. It is important to mention, that not every picture or video published on the internet becomes a meme. To fully fulfil its whole meaning in needs to generally understood in the internet community and be versatile enough to be reused for different messages. Every internet meme refers to its original every time it is used. Therefore, intertextuality is a very essence of an internet meme a "crossroads of the medium, the people and the message." (Laineste & Voolaid, 2017).

Its main purpose is to entertain internet users and it is often shared through the social media such as Facebook or webpages directly specialising in memes such as 9gag.com or Failblog.org. Some content creators sign their own work and are generally known on the internet, while majority of the meme creators are unknown, and they might have only a single successful meme. An example of a successful meme creator on the Czech internet would be Tomáš Břínek, who creates paste-ups under his artist name TMBK, or Jaz, who came from the Czech message board Okoun.cz and is widely known for his "Opraski Sčeski Historje" Facebook page. Although many content consumers see memes on very popular sites such as 9GAG.com or through several Facebook groups, those are not likely the place where they were created. Most of the memes were created on message board websites like 4chan.org and its derivates.

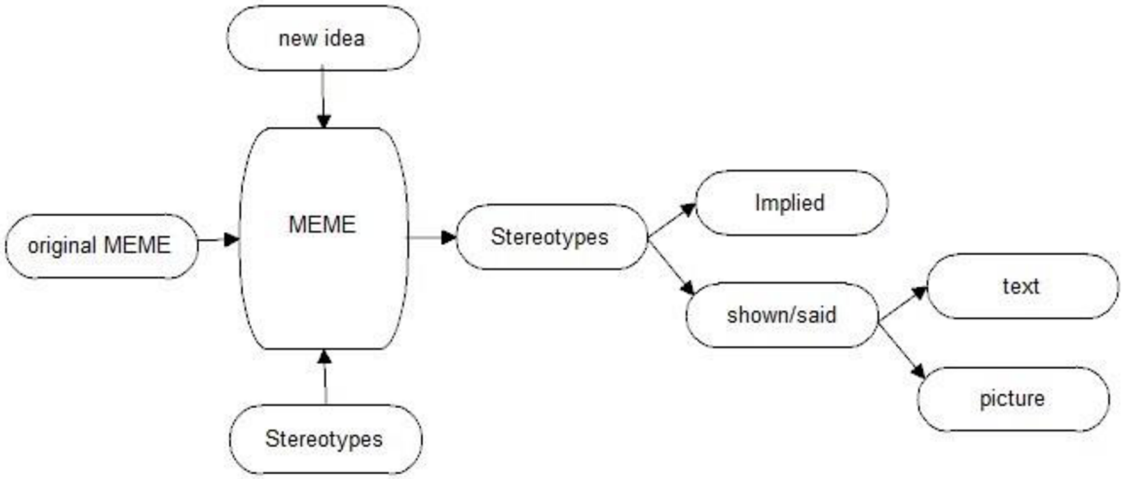

Figure 2. Meme creation

In the figure 2, we can see a creation process of an established meme. It refers to an original meme, with which it shares the general idea, shape and looks. The creator then adds an original idea, which recreates the meme to his own image. It can be very similar to the original or very far away. The stereotypes or may not be included, since it depends solely on the targeted audience and a topic of a meme. In CS:GO memes shown in this thesis, the stereotypes are main message of the meme and they have two functions. First function is to educate the reader to avoid doing such things and second is to entertain as it helps the message itself to be shared to other people.

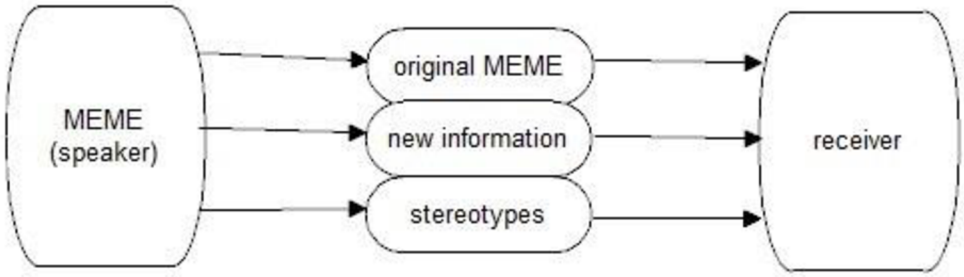

Figure 3. Meme reading

In the figure 3 we can see a reader of a stereotypical meme. It includes three things. The meaning of the original meme, the general stereotypical

message and current stereotypical message. My theory is, that when one is reading stereotypical meme, the new message is not seen as an original one, but rather is automatically included into general stereotype. So in the same time a CS:GO stereotypical meme refers also to all stereotypical memes at the same time and not only to the original one.

1.7) Data

There are three main categories, which can be divided by the type of communication. The in-game communication both written and spoken, retrieved as chatlogs from moderately rated matches. The after-game on sites like Reddit.com or Facebook pages related to the topic to support some of my claims by players. And the Internet creative works like internet memes and YouTube videos. My goal is to find interconnections between all those channels of communication in creating the impression and stereotypes of Russian CS:GO community.

1.8) Methods

The chosen excerpts of communication will be inspected for intertextuality and found occurrences further classified. Especially the source of the Intertextuality, whether it refers to the outside world, CS:GO community or general Russian stereotypes. In case of memes and YouTube videos it can be also divided into visual and vocal references or into implied and stated references.

2) Gender representation

According to Lofgren about 48% of gamers are female. (2016), but it is important to notice, that in the article gaming on mobile devices was also counted and the actual number of female gamers in CS:GO is lower as it is a traditional computer video game and as Fox & Tang say "video games have

traditionally been perceived as a male space" (2014). And because the male players are very aggressive towards females, as Fox & Tang say "sexual harassment behaviours range from making suggestive or discriminatory comment to coercing someone to perform sexual acts" many females choose to hide their true sex and stay in anonymity. In case of CS:GO it means, that they will not speak to their team mates, because voice is the only thing, which can give them away. And according to study made by Kuznekoff & Rose the players "reacted more negatively to a female voice than a male voice" (2013), which gives makes female decision to stay voiceless reasonable. Many male players have female names or avatars, and everyone expects them to be male. Due to the fact, that females are avoiding voice communication, they are not so memorable and therefore not connected with the in-game negative attitudes. In the CS:GO community it is the Russian male player and not the female, who is attributed with all the prejudices. In contrary what we have learnt so far Walker says, "The CS:GO community doesn't really treat one gender better than another — it just treats human beings like trash," and if it were true for the whole community it would mean, that the female players are only more sensitive. (2015)

3) CS:GO Terminology and map points

3.1) Game maps

In the context of CS:GO the "map" or a "game map" is the area where players play. The fact that it matters whether you win or lose forced the players to name a great number of spots on the map or even coin new ones in order to communicate quickly with the team and increase their chance to win the match. There are always eight maps in the professional map pool and the players focus on playing them more than the ones marked as reserve maps. Every game map

has several of its own terms and even very similar objects on a different map might have a different name.

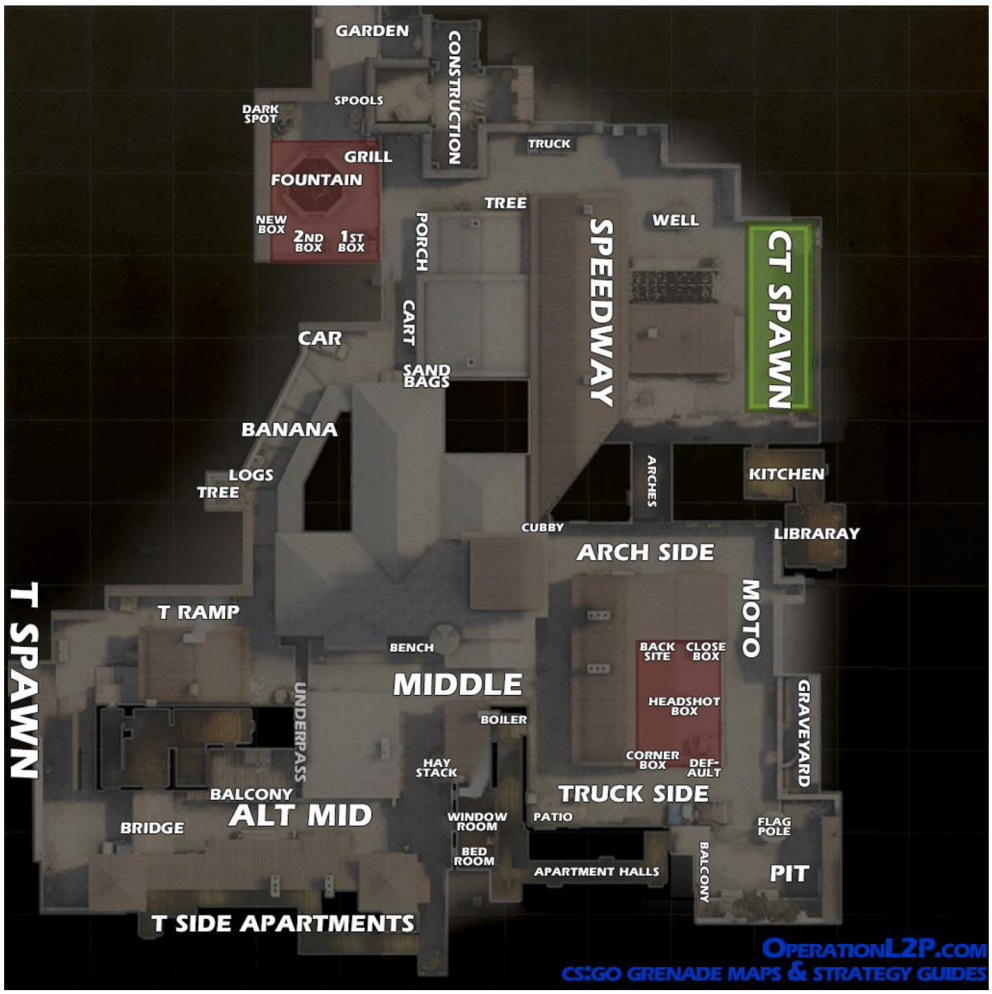

Figure 4. DE_INFERNO ("DE_INFERNO")

For example, on the mini-map of the Inferno map, you can see a vast number of locations named in English. Among others there is a spot called "T ramp", which refers to a ramp leading from the spawn Terrorist area to the "Mid" area and is very similar to a location called "Hell" on the Mirage game map, but to most of the players you can use any of those terms and the message is understood by the receiver. Another difference with naming the game locations comes up when the map is updated. Valve remakes it as they desire to rebalance the maps, which are overly "one sided". "One sided" means that either T or CT is expected to win more rounds in an equal match-up. For example, on the Inferno map, the defence of the objectives is easier than their

siege and therefore majority of the first halves of the match ends up 10:5 for the team on CT side. Graphics need to be updated as well to keep up with the new games coming every year and for many players the visual aspect of the game is very important. Valve designers remade the Inferno map, which was mentioned above last year and on the top area near the "Fountain" in "B site" the spot called "spools" after two big spools placed one on another was removed from the game and replaced by a set of coffins. The spot was also called "Coils" and even after the update many players still refer to it by its old name. It is partly caused by the fact, that the players are so used to the old terms, that they refuse to give up and use a new term as they find it useless and the old terms are very much understood by the whole player-base. On the other hand, many players adapt to the new term as they are afraid that some players have not played the map before and they do not want to cause confusion, because the game gets many new players every month and their desire to win makes them learn new terms. Some designer-changes completely remove very important spots on the map. For example, in the "Banana" area on the Inferno map there is a small safe spot called "tree" due to the fact, that there actually was a tree in previous versions of the map, but in the latest version it was removed. It is still fastest to call it with its old name as it still plays significant role in terms of tactics, but for many new players this will cause serious problems in the future as there is no physical object, that gave the name to the location. And eventually it might disappear completely as it would be too risky for the veteran players to call it the old way, as it might cause confusion and lose rounds due to miscommunication.

3.2) Team Calling

While playing competitive mode in CS:GO it is very crucial to be as brief and as informative as possible. The speaker should tell his teammates position and number of enemy players and what weapons they have if he notices. The

game lets you know if you have damaged other players after you die, and it might be very important, as low health enemies can be damaged easily with worse weapons or grenades. As for strategy it should be discussed in a 15 second period before the game starts as well as during the round, but generally players should avoid talking too much, because to hear the sound of moving enemies can be crucial. It is recommended to use as simple language as you can, because the English levels may differ among the players and longer sentences are not as easily decoded under fire.

4) In-game communication

The in-game communication can be both written and spoken and even though it can greatly influence the game many players decide to disable it. The number of those players in competitive play is distributed within the lower ranks because success in CS:GO is based on personal skill. Team play is very crucial as well and it is impossible to win some skirmishes without the knowledge of your teammates. It important to mention, that in-game communication is present in all other game modes outside of competitive, but ideas presented in this thesis are taken only from the competitive point of view of the game, because communication in other game modes is irrelevant from tactical point of view and very different from communication in competitive mode. The communication is therefore friendlier, since the game often allows you to speak to the enemy team and the matches are in general more casual, which leads into many players ignoring the chat altogether. And even though, there might be some anti-Russian tendencies in casual game modes, it does not originate in them.

4.1) Voice in-game communication

In-game voice communication is the fastest way of communication, as you can play and talk at the same time even though it might be very hard

considering the competitive aspect of the game, which can stress the player out and make them underperform. It is the prime channel used for team calling. It is a very useful tool if the message broadcasted is clear and helpful. If you look onto the in-game communication with Grice's maxims, the maxim of manner is the key in the hectic in-game communication. In a study performed in a similar online environment, using voice communication "strengthens the level of relationship and trust between players that play a lot together", but in case of CS:GO it cannot have such effect as matches in the game are very short and with so many players around it is almost impossible to randomly meet the same players more than once. (Williams, Caplan, & Xiong, 2007) Many players decide to avoid voice communication because of various reasons. The first reason would be their shyness and inability to communicate on a certain level in English, which is often only their personal fear, because for basic tactical call outs in CS:GO only a basic knowledge of English together with knowledge of map locations is enough to give everything that is needed to know. The second reason in question is the age of the players. Young players are often too scared to say anything at all, because gaming communities are very often very "Toxic", which means that they pick on other players for whatever reason they can find and if someone sounds as a "kid" it is much easier for his team mates to "flame" if they underperform. "To Flame" means to call someone names or generally cause a bad attitude and mood in the whole team, which in the end usually makes the situation even worse considering the fact, that some players are not able to sustain never ending flaming and might end up "griefing" which means either to not play on purpose, deal damage to team mates, telling the enemy team locations their team mates or generally giving up on purpose. It is strongly connected with CS:GO community because that is defined as "griefing" in report form for every player in the game. In other games, it might relate to "feeding", which stands for dying on purpose in games in which the enemy

players receive in game gold or other currency for which they can boost themselves up. The third main reason would be the female part of the community. Many female players, who play with random team mates assigned to them by the match making system, voluntarily choose to avoid the voice communication as the majority of CS:GO community is male and therefore they do not feel very welcome, because for many male players it is just another trigger for being toxic. Any errors, misinformation or lack of information leads to strengthening of CS:GO player stereotypes.

4.2) Written in-game communication

The written communication in CS:GO is very rarely used for tactical discussions. Generally, only by those who do not have microphone or choose to avoid voice communication for reasons stated in previous chapter or other. The reason is that the players who are still alive in the game round do not have time to stop focusing on the game and read the chat instead. Also, in the game you can choose to write in a team chat or in the general chat, which can be seen by both teams. The chat for everybody is a very dangerous place. Considering that the whole game is very competitive it is the ideal tool for "flaming" the enemy team. It is very rare to have a good discussion with the opponents. Most of the time one team is claiming that the other team is cheating in one way or another and telling them, that they are going to be banned eventually. Most of it relates to several bad words and it is usually done in the native language of the accuser, as it is common for people to respond in their native language if they are angry. (Gawinkowska, Paradowski, Bilewicz, & Aronoff, 2013).

4.3) Language

Counter Strike Global offensive is available in 25 different languages including English and Russian. The language of the game itself is bound to the language set in the Steam client and is automatically set upon downloading the client. It can be switched afterwards, but majority of the players do not switch the language in question as the language part in games such as CS:GO does not play a major role and it is not required to fully understand the game. The CS:GO community is generally expected to understand English as it is generally used for communication with teammates, who are put together via the matchmaking system which connects players who are close to each other to achieve as low latency as possible and language settings are not considered. The English terms and map locations are learnt mainly through the game itself, as anyone who does not have their language localization of the game automatically gets it set to English. The Reddit community and professional match casting at major tournaments are in English and therefore even a player who plays only with his non-English will adopt the English terms.

5) Stereotypical players

The language used is generally connected to three main points: the number of same language speaking friend-circles, the size of the same speaking group in the game and the level of English or any other foreign language of the player. Some players tend to use English terms even if they are playing only with their friends and they do not need to, and some players will even use their native language if the majority of the team does not speak it and they have only a single friend around. Since the CS:GO is very intensive, the players tend to quickly evaluate their teammates on their performance, attitude and level of communication and they will put them into a stereotype in order to acknowledge the reality of the current match as fast as possible and adapt their playstyle as fast as possible. The players will be judged according to their

quality and amount of team calls, performance, nationality and their nickname. For example, a player with a childish or offensive nickname might be seen as a potential "griefer". Or a player with name in Cyrillic will relate to the Russian stereotypes.

5.1) The Funny guy

The player is trying to make fun of the game even if he is losing and does not try to offend anyone on his team and sometimes even on the enemy team. The level of English is usually high since he can make jokes. From the point of view of team calling, they are usually talking too much, and it might cost the friendly team some rounds, due to hot hearing the enemy through their jokes. The player can sometimes make even practical jokes in the game, but by many other players it would be considered as "grifieng" and they will "flame" him. The difference is in number of occurrences in the match and the initial purpose of the joke, but it is not always understood in the proper way.

5.2) Griefer/Troll/intentional AFKer

Those types of players are intentionally destroying the game for other players. Those players are usually pushed into this role by their previous disappointment or anger from previous match or general experience with the game. Many players switch into these types during the match if they are not doing well, their team is not doing well, or they had a very vocal argument with their team, but it is usually a combination of all these three. The "Griefing" players are usually very vocal, arrogant and offensive against both enemies and team players or they give up communicating at all. The players do not give any information to their teammates, but very commonly give information to the enemy via the written all chat. Those types of players can drag their teammates

into the same role as they see no point in fighting the impossible fight and just give up finishing the already lost match earlier.

DEAD Panni2000 : counter strike sucks

DEAD BruceL337 : yes

DEAD Panni2000 : i mean this is bs

DEAD BruceL337 : what

DEAD Panni2000 : waste my time

DEAD Panni2000 : by playing comp games

DEAD BruceL337 : why tho

yaerik : why u save then

DEAD BruceL337 : u not playing with friends?

DEAD Panni2000 : save for team

DEAD Panni2000 : giving weapons to the team

Panni2000 : i dont have friends that are on my rank

Panni2000 : i mean i have no rank xd

DEAD Panni2000 : this is bs

In the chatlog above there are players chatting with each other from opposing teams. They are not rude at each other, but player "Panni2000" seems generally negative about whole game and his performance in the match. He ends up going afk for the last two rounds of the match, because he expected his team to lose 13:16. But his teammates managed to win the round in 4v5 situation making it 14:15, but then lost the final round since Panni2000 left the match too early. He ended up getting griefing reports from whole team and was cursed at via voice chat.

5.3) The "tryhard"

Those types of players are trying to win their matches at all costs. They usually give a very solid game calls and do not talk much when it is not necessary. Demands team calls from his teammates. On the other hand given their competitive spirit if their team is underperforming they can easily transform into a Toxic player, Griefer or even AFKer.

Player 1: wee… in boiler

Player 1: Purple they are gonna be on A.

Player 2: Do what? We cannot retake this shit.

Player 1: Yeah you can, it is 3v2.

Player 2: No, we cannot, because the other guy has just pistol that is why.

Player 1: cy…

Player 1: Yeah player with deagle is better than you are playing.

Player 2: fuck off

In the transcribed chatlog there are two teammates. Player one the "try hard" who is already dead giving info and trying to convince player 2 to try to retake and defuse bomb. Their team was in very bad situation, with one player on other side of the map and poorly equipped. They end up trying almost impossible retake in which they kill two of their opposing players, but still lose. And "try hard" player 1 is salty, even though player 2 was right and it was much better call to stay alive until the end of the round and save weapons and equipment for the following one.

5.4) Toxic players

Toxic player is "someone in a game that is a horrible teammate and player but thinks they are a fucking genius and not the reason the team is losing."(KidGucci939, 2017) The player is usually very aggressive in his speech and very easy to make angry. They may or may not turn into a Griefer. The players have not lost all hope in the match and therefore their team calls are usually decent, but he is swearing a lot.

DEAD Bucket Man : nice wh prefire XD

DEAD Only-woo : you're an elephant you do so much noize + i didnt prefire i shot when i saw you

DEAD Bucket Man : ofc. Reported + mute.

DEAD Only-woo : np ^^

DEAD Only-woo : wont get ban anyway

In the chatlog above player Bucket man accused player from another team named Only-woo from cheating. The accused player defends himself, stating that he could hear him moving so he knew he was there and also denied that he started shooting too early, which is possible if you have knowledge about someone's location before you can see him usually with help of cheats. The Bucket Man does not listen to reason and reports him and mutes him, which stops any further communication between them.

6) Russian Stereotypes

The perception of Russians and their language in CS:GO is heavily influenced by their representation in history and media. Armeyskov suggests, that from the Marquis de Custine and his travelogue "La Russie en 1839". (2013) Through the Communist era, the Cold War and now Putins regime. Russia was often seen as a threat to democracy and therefore a strong enemy. The hostile representation in the western society has created many stereotypes, which are partly supported by CS:GO. The Russian stereotypes are known under the term "klyukvification" formed from the word 'klyukva' (i.e. cranberry in Russian) + 'fication' (as in mysti*fication*). (Armeyskov, 2013) They can be both negative and positive. Before the age of the internet the Russian cultural stereotypes were most massively spread by the film industry with titles like the Bond movie "From Russia with Love" or an American comedy "Police Academy: Moscow Mission". They were very impactful, because a great number of people have seen the movie. Nowadays in the age of the internet is the strongest mean to distribute the stereotypical view on Russian culture spread by internet memes. For an internet user today, it is almost impossible to avoid internet memes. They will pop up in some form eventually even if you are not actively searching for them. Therefore, nowadays they can be more influential than a Hollywood Blockbuster like movies mentioned above even when they are made only with a little effort, time or money. Some memes can go viral, which means that they are actively send by user to user and they can influence many people. Even if the exact meme is not shared thousands or even millions of times the massage can still get to the internet user simply by another meme with a very similar meaning.

6.1) Russian Stereotypical memes

Since we are trying to find a connection between internet community in CS:GO we will support our claims by current internet memes. The creator of the

meme does not have to obtain those stereotypes from other internet memes, perhaps they have been to Russia themselves and it was their observation, or they read the Travelogue from 1839, but the items or traits shown in the picture are most common since they were worth putting in the picture.

Figure 5. Crazy Russian (Backl4sh)

The meme used above is called the "In soviet Russia…" and usually ends with something opposite that is common. In this particular meme it is only the text, which connects us back to the original idea, rather than the image used. It shows us the expectation that things in Russia works differently, because no one can understand why. To quote Winston Churchill here "Russia is a Riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma".

Figure 6. Russian Starter pack (Anonymous, n.d.)

To find out, which items are most commonly related to Russia the "Starter pack" memes are ideal. In the picture you can see stuff related to clothing and general appearance. It shows the main things nowadays related to so called "gopnik". The term itself represents a young white uneducated male often involved in some low-level crimes. The Gopnik wears Adidas tracksuit, smokes a lot of cigarettes, drinks vodka, squats a lot, swears a lot, wears gold rings and necklaces and is very aggressive. This vision has become an internet representation of Slavs on the internet. On Facebook there is a page called "Squating slavs in tracksuits", which creates many memes about this stereotype and it has over 920,000 likes so it can be very influential. The gopnik stereotype has now pushed away the more traditional Russian bad guy. For example, as seen in the "Boondock saints" movie, which pictures the typical Russian in more masculine, evil and cleverer way. The film producers will probably stick to their stereotype, but for a young internet user gopnik stereotype is more present and he might judge his teammates in CS:GO according to it.

Figure 7. Russian (Orpheass, 2016)

The Russians are also believed to love Putin and support his undemocratic rule, which makes them see as a manipulative and dangerous people in general. The Orthodox Church had always had a strong position in Russia, but large number of the western countries are still very religious, so it is not a deciding factor.

6.2) CS:GO Russian Player Stereotypical memes

The memes concerning CS:GO, are generally shared through the CS:GO Facebook groups. They can be found on general meme sites as the CS:GO gaming community is rather significant among common population, but thematic Facebook groups or a Subreddit are the right place to find them.

CS:GO memes are often so simple, that even if used in non-English groups they are easily understood. There is a number of anti-Russian memes, which can be used to demonstrate Russian stereotypes Russians, but while it may seem as the general opinion the amount of people who create internet content is very low if you compare it with the total number of the viewers. According to Jakob Nielsen "In most online communities, 90% of users are lurkers who never contribute, 9% of users contribute a little, and 1% of users account for almost all the action." (Nielsen, 2006). And in case of CS:GO, some players do not visit CS:GO subreddit or are not active in any Facebook group, so the actual number might be even lower. Even though the opinions expressed in such memes are very valuable sources for the research.

Figure 8. After 500 Hours Of Cs:go (Mrs marcia hunter, n.d.-a)

The first meme is a CS:GO version of a "That changes everything" (RandomMan & mona_jpn, 2016) meme that is used very often as the speech bubbles are exploitable and the two characters can be put into very different humorous situations. In case of the CS:GO meme, it refers to the idea, that there are so many Russian players in the CS:GO community. And especially those who swear a lot are much more visible than the rest of the Russian speaking players. From the non-Russian point of view it might seem, that to

communicate successfully in Russian, only a few basic swear words are required and that every CS:GO player can master it easily. The meme does not make any outside references apart of the original meme.

Russians in CS:GO

Figure 9. Dank Memes, Russian. (Mrs marcia hunter, n.d.-d)

The second meme is a version of "Trying to Hold a Fart Next to a Cute Girl in Class" (Sn0wCh1ld & Brad, 2016), which is used in a situation where you are tempted to do something, but you cannot, or it represents the temptation itself. In this case, it works with the stereotype, that every Russian is a "flaming", "toxic" player, who cannot withstand the temptation to annoy some other player either by "griefing", insulting or simply speaking Russian, which is rooted in the general Russian gopnik stereotype.

CS:GO russian starter pack

Figure 10. and Russian: The "CS: G O (Mrs marcia hunter, n.d.-b)

The third meme is a "Starter pack" meme, which is generally not connected with a certain image, but it is basically a list of characteristic features of the topic in question represented as pictures. The author puts six very common expectations about the Russian-speaking players. The idea behind the dog and Soviet flag is the assumption, that every Russian player dresses the same and that they are still glorifying the Soviet Union. The crossed LGBT flag is a general view of the western society on Russian society, which is seen as very oppressive against the Queer community. The headset with the potato is actually very understandable for a person, who is not a part of the CS:GO community; the only thing he needs to know, is that the term "potato" can have various meanings. In this instance, it refers to the "potato quality", which means a very bad quality and in CS:GO the Russian players are expected to be very poor and have the cheapest peripheral available. Also, it can refer to a famous scene in video game Portal 2, where the main antagonist – a very powerful computer is transformed into a potato battery, which greatly limits its performance. The fourth assumption is closely connected with the previous one as the Russians are expected to have a very poor internet. Especially due to the size of the country itself and the Russian players might want to team up with a friend, who lives on the other side of this huge country. The fifth image pictures a B bomb site on the most played map Dust II. The Russians are expected to execute a "rush" tactic every time it is possible, and this is a visual representation of it. The last part of this meme represents the general opinion about the Russian players and it is very like thoughts expressed in the second meme. The potato refers outside of the

Figure 11. Starter Packs - CS:GO Russian (Anonymous, 2016).

The following meme is very similar in style, but the overall quality is worse. If we skip the ideas, that were present in the last picture, only a bottle of vodka remains. The Russians generally are considered to be heavy drinkers and the CS:GO community is not an exception. Especially if the western players hear news from Russia like the Irkutsk mass alcohol poisoning. As Shaun Walker reports: "at least 48 people were reported dead on Monday from drinking a bath tincture known for its high alcohol content."(Walker, 2016), it is very hard to imagine, that such news would not make the western community members think, that Russians are alcoholic and that they excessively drink anything that has a high alcohol content.

Figure 12. Every Russian CS.GO player. (Anonymous, 2017b)

The general hate towards very young CS:GO players is shown in the next meme. The hate is not only connected to the young Russian players. The very young players are believed to be very bad players and on top of that very hard to communicate with. Either for their immaturity, which makes them more vulnerable towards "flaming" and becoming "toxic" players. Or due to the fact, that if they are not English native speakers, the level of their English is very low, and they speak their native language in the in-game voice chat all the time, just like a CS:GO player would expect a Russian player to behave.

Figure 13. Who plays CS:GO at 3 in the (Mrs marcia hunter, n.d.-c)

The following meme is a CS:GO version of the "Oh Boy, 3 AM!" meme from the television series SpongeBob SquarePants. It "is an exploitable used mostly often when someone asks who does ''this thing" at 3 A.M. ''Who wants/does "x" at three in the morning?'' then someplace else, ironically, someone else's alarm goes off at 3 a.m., the image shows "x" and says: ''Oh boy! Three A.M.!'''' (CheesDoDo, 2016). In the CS:GO context the message is shown together with a picture of Vladimir Putin, bottles of vodka and a very high ping indicator. CS:GO players are generally very carefully choosing the time to play competitive matches. It is believed that if you play between 12 PM and 8 PM, there is a very high chance of getting a very young immature player in your team. Since they are probably done with school for the day and are free

to bother people online and troll a few CS:GO matches until they have to go to bed. The time is extended enormously during weekends and especially summer holidays, but the assumption is not connected solely with young Russian players. The other time period, in which it might be very hard to play a decent game with serious teammates is between 11 PM and 8 AM. During those hours, the community expects, that the number of intoxicated players, who are joining matches is increased. It is quite a common thing to meet players, who are drunk or intoxicated with marihuana. And intoxicated players generally do not really care if they win the game and their physical performance is usually not on par with when they are sober. They are also easily made angry, which may lead into "griefing" and "flaming". The idea of the meme is, that the Russian players are believed to be drunk all the time and therefore make an ideal target group, which can be blamed for ruining night matches for other players.

Figure 14. Finnaly gota good (Anonymous, 2017a)

The next meme is a version of a "Socially Awkward and Awesome Meme", which is a meme from "advice animals" subcategory. Which is generally connected with a socially negative of positive things and both parts are used together or just one of them is used alone. Many internet users and especially, those who are creating memes, are believed to be "neckbeards" or "basement dwellers". Those people are believed to be rather obese, they still live with their parents in a basement, have no job, no girlfriend/partner and spend all the time

on the internet. Their social skills are so bad, that they need to express it with such memes. In the CS:GO meme, there are mixed emotions shown. The player who is obviously not Russian has a very good team and has nothing to complain about, but the fact that his teammates are Russian, and they are winning is puzzling to him. He somehow dislikes the fact, that he cannot complain and that his simple prejudiced views on the Russian player base in CS:GO are dissolved by his own experience.

Figure 15. CSGO meme (Csgo_of_silver)

The last meme, from the set in which I choose the most significant ideas about Russian CS:GO players shared with the world in the form of picture internet memes is a picture, which puts together the most hated nations in League of Legends, DOTA 2 and CS:GO. The perception of the Poles in League of Legends was mentioned above, but as the mem creator suggest, the Russian community is perceived in the same light in DOTA 2 as in CS:GO. And even insists, that in case of CS:GO the Polish and Russian communities are perceived in equal manner, but from the tone of other CS:GO meme creators the hate against Polish players is not very visible and is overwhelmed by the omnipresent anti-Russian tendencies.

7) YouTube

In today's Internet era, social networks are crucial part of life. For people around the world it is very easy to share their opinion or creations with the rest of the world within seconds. In the beginnings of the online gaming communities, the communication was almost solely done either in game or on specialised forums. Internet connection speed was very low at that time and therefore opinions could only be spread through written texts as many people paid for every kilobyte of internet traffic and loading an image would be very expensive and slow. The sharing of videos through the internet was almost unthinkable. And the forums were very often closed, and strangers and new players could hardly join the community. Nowadays opinions, comments and rants are often spread through videos, images and animations. Video sharing grew with the raise of YouTube and images and animations are mostly part of the "Internet memes"

7.1) YouTube anti-Russian videos

YouTube is a very significant and influential website, which is used for sharing video content of almost every kind to large groups of people. In the case of CS:GO the major and most viewed content are VoDs (Videos on Demand) of the matches, professional player content and entertaining videos and songs, which display the state of the game and community. The young generation is very closely connected to YouTube and to the famous content creators or "YouTubers". It is possible to earn loads of money from the advertisement revenue and it is possible to become a fulltime YouTuber. Many new players are recruited from the YouTube audience.

7.2) YouTube songs

On YouTube, famous songs are often covered with different lyrics in order to match a desire of the audience of the YouTuber who creates it, or brand-new songs are made, but in order to be successful they have to be very good, funny or must really fulfil the desires of the viewers. In case of CS:GO majority of the songs have some anti-Russian sentiment. Among successful CS:GO song makers I would mention the Polish creator oczosinkolegend, who is known for writing songs both about the game as well as about the professional players. The songs are very poorly written, sang out of sync and with very strong Polish accent. He usually refrains from the anti-Russian sentiment, unlike the other creator worth mentioning: DIMITRI THE RUSSIAN. He creates videos and songs with a rather significant notion of Russian CS:GO culture. He uses Russian accent, dresses up in stereotypical Russian clothes and even his name reflects his humorous intentions.

The first song lyrics we will review is a song by a creator called Triggered Pinguin named "Hello From The Ruski Side". The song is a parody of the song sung by the British artist Adele: "Hello". The song is sing from the view of a Russian player with a very strong accent. There are four major aspects that were pointed out earlier already. The first is the idea, that Russians are "trying to destroy (the game) for everyone", which relates to the general idea that the Russians are very toxic and very unfriendly towards everyone and especially towards non-Russian players. The second point is the fact that he "ask Ruski jest", which is often the first thing people hear after a Russian player joins a match and other players have become afraid of that phrase. "They tell me I suck on this game" is linked to two things. Russian players are often hated by the community and they acknowledge that, also they are perceived as very bad players. The last thing he mentions is that he "Can't understand" them with is clearly meant as a mockery of Russian English skills. ("Hello from the Ruski

side", 2016) The Cyka Blyat Song is not based on any internationally known song. It is an original work of the YouTuber named ThunderSlav, but it gained popularity after DIMITRI THE RUSSIAN added lyrics and reuploaded it to his channel. The lyrics are rather repetitive and there are three notable points. It is once again sing with a very strong Russian accent.
The Russian just " rush b and go ", which refers to the lack of their tactical skill. When he "drink some vodka" it is the excessive drinking, which is attributed to the Russian people in general. ("THE CYKA BLYAT SONG", 2016) He also points out that Russians in CS:GO do not like "fuckin amerika" ("THE CYKA BLYAT SONG", 2016), which is probably caused by the historical events, which lead to the Cold War and many Russians still do not like the "Western world". It does not refer only to American citizens, basically if you are caught in an argument with a Russian player in game and your English is good, you are called "a fuckin amerikan" regardless of your country of origin.

The next song is called "Why Can't We Rush B" and is based on a song from the American funk band WAR: "- Why Can't We Be Friends?" ("Why Can't We Rush B", 2017) and once again it was made by DIMITRI THE RUSSIAN. In this song, the lyrics are even shorter than the previous song. The whole song is basically only about "Rush B", which was encountered in this thesis many times before. The idea seems to be very significant and omnipresent as it can be found in almost every anti-Russian thing this thesis examines.

The last examined song is the "Don't Worry be Ruski" once again made by DIMITRI THE RUSSIAN. The song is based on "Don't worry be happy" by Bobby McFerrin and it sounds very positive just like the original song even though there are many things that were pointed out in previous songs, memes or forum posts. The Russian player is shown as someone who does not care about the game and that he is always positive no matter what happens. It is an opposite approach if you compare it with anything that was examined here

before. It is possible, that the author kept the positive approach only to point out that the Russian player does not care about the game only because he is intoxicated with cannabis. It is not as if the original author, McFerrin, is in any way connected with it, but on the internet, many credited the song to Bob Marley who is known for his attitude towards cannabis and the feel of the song would suit his work.

7.3) YouTube videos

Unlike CS:GO in song videos, in the other YouTube videos there may also be a place for a constructive description of the state of the community. I have chosen 3 completely different videos from various creators, who each deal with the Russian problem in their own unique way. The creators do not have the same number of subscribers, but the difference is not that significant.

The first video is made by the seventeen years old Belgian YouTuber "Mojo". His channel "MojoOnPC" is not strictly connected only with CS:GO as he has many videos related to real life as well. He has by far the most subscribers out of the three YouTubers mentioned in this thesis and the video, which we will be looking at has over 9,5 million views. The video is called "Day in The Life of a Russian CS:GO Player!" and it is a depiction of a community-imagined day of a "normal" Russian player. A common Russian player with a very strong accent who is dressed in Russian style, drinks vodka whole day and occasionally plays CS:GO. As mentioned above the excessive drinking is omnipresent in the general perception of the Russians on the whole internet. The author is shown playing CS:GO on three different occasions and each time his tone is rather different. In the first encounter, he is shown as a very friendly player, who meets some common western players, who are very displeased as soon as they hear Russian and he ends up being kicked due to his poor English proficiency. It is worth mentioning, that the game allows players to kick their team mate,

who is then replaced by a bot, which can be controlled by a player who already died during a round, but it is required to have majority of votes and in case of a five-man competitive team, you have to have all four voting in favour of a kick. In the second encounter, he is left by his friend and must play alone. He is slightly upset by it and ends up calling the "rush B" strategy repeatedly and when he is suggested to do something else he becomes rather upset about it. In the end of that match, he is distracted by a bottle of vodka and eventually ends up being kicked from the match. It once again shows the Russian players to be very poorly strategically skilled, "toxic" and very vulnerable to "griefing". The author further shows us another match in which the player is rather upset and is driven even madder by the anti-Russian comments and ends up "griefing". He blames everything on the "americans" and takes no blame himself. ("Jansen, 2015)

The second video ("*Learn Russian for CS:GO.*", 2016) is made by a YouTuber called simply – Boris. He calls himself a "*Slav superstar*" or "*Boris the Shashlik King*" as he became famous, because of his videos in which he makes fun of prejudices about Slavs and especially Russian. (Šmíd, 2016) He was born in an unspecified Slavic country, but currently lives in Estonia due to work. Given all the fuss, that the Russian CS:GO community gets, he made a video called "Learn Russian for CS:GO". In the video, he translates significant Russian words and phrases, which are used very commonly in CS:GO or general Russian terms and shows them on examples from the game. He mentions more terms, than what we have mentioned earlier, but those are required only if one would really want to try to communicate with them in Russian, which barely anyone does. Most western players are only trying to communicate with their Russian teammates in English and if that seems impossible to do, they give up talking to them or even mute them and just suffer through the rest of the match. The

tone of the video seems to be rather neutral with a slight sarcastic undertone, which can be heard in his voice.

The third video called "Russians in CS:GO" is made by a YouTuber called "NFKRZ", who, unlike the previous two YouTubers, is a native Russian. The whole video is a serious talk about the Russian problem in video games and CS:GO in particular. He states the general problems and offers a possible explanation, why are the Russian players so anti-Western and "salty". Salty is often used on the internet communities and in video games communities as and synonym of a word "angry". The author states, that he does not support his government and that he himself has more or less westernised political views. As was mentioned earlier, the anti-Western propaganda and tensions are deeply rooted in the Russian people since the Cold War and the author says, that the hate is being rekindled by the Russian contemporary media for past three (the video is two years old) years. ("RUSSIANS IN CSGO", 2015). Therefore, the bad attitude and hate against the western world from the real-life media is somehow transformed into the virtual world of the CS:GO. And the West returns the hate in a similar way.

Conclusion

The image CS:GO Russian community is heavily based on bad stereotypes. If we include the stereotype as the "smallest part" of intertextuality as Aktulum suggest, then we could stay, that it is omnipresent in the whole CS:GO community. (2017) Other forms of intertextuality apart from stereotypes were almost non-existent and apart from the original meme reference in case of memes, the stereotypes referred almost solely to the three main stereotypical fields. In the In-game communication the references are rather done than said for example the "teabagging" mentioned above or by nickname. (Bondi, 2017) In the memes and parody songs, refer to the concept of the original. While,

parody is used in the song, memes are not parodies of the original memes, because they share a deeper interconnection and every derived meme.

Stereotypes are present in all studied communication channels, but in some it is more of a passive presence than an active spread. For example, in the In-game communication the player evaluates other player based on stereotypical roles they know from the previous matches, but rarely expresses them. It really depends on the nature of player and how well they are doing in the game. Memes and YouTube videos on the other hand are full of stereotypes and are easily spreading them, due to their humorous nature. Laineste & Voolaid suggest in their work, that humour achieved through intertextuality in memes "fulfilled a supportive function in the actual political discussion" (Laineste & Voolaid, 2017), which can be also applied in this thesis, just instead of a political problem, the meme creators see the problem in the Russian part of the gaming community and want to start a discussion and educate the misbehaving players. But since there are no official data stating, which nationality is the most banned in the game, it is possible that the whole Russian CS:GO problem exists only in form of memes, videos and Stereotypes.

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Summary

This thesis discusses the perception of Russians in online environment of the popular video game Counter Strike: Global Offensive and deals with potential problems that might emerge from misunderstandings and cultural differences of the players mainly within the European region.

The thesis is divided into three parts. In its theoretical part, the thesis begins with the definition of key terms and of the way they are used in the thesis. Intertextuality, Allusion, parody, stereotypes and internet memes and their creation.

In the second part, the reader is introduced to the world of CS:GO, then briefly to the role of both written and oral communication within teams and the function of English and Russian language in the community.

The last part is focused on stereotypes and other features of intertextuality, which can be found in internet memes, YouTube songs and videos and in in-game communication.

Resumé

Tato práce rozebírá vnímání Rusů v online prostředí populární počítačové hry Counter Strike: Global Offensive a řeší potenciální problémy, které mohou vyvstat z nedorozumění a kulturní rozdílnosti hráčů převážně z evropského regionu.

Práce je rozdělena do tří částí. V její teoretické části práce začíná definicí klíčových termínů a způsobu jakým jsou použity. Intertextualita, aluze, stereotypy a internetové memy a jejich vytváření.

Ve druhé části je čtenář uveden do světa CS:GO, pak je letmo seznámen s rolí jak psané pak mluvené herní komunikace a funkcí angličtiny a ruštiny v komunitě.

Poslední část je zaměřena na stereotypy a další funkce intertextuality, které mohou být nalezeny v internetových memech, písních a videích na YouTube a v herní komunikaci.