
GG's and NT's: Gaming language in the chat feature of FPS game Valorant**Allycia Susanti***

Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author; Email: allyrxmar@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Language plays a significant role in gaming. First-person shooting (FPS) video game players need to communicate with each other to coordinate and progress in the game. However, there is still a big gap in research regarding language use in gaming outside the scope of language learning and acquisition. Thus, this research paper analyses the way Valorant players communicate with each other via text messages during matches. Conversations that took place during five matches are retrieved from the built-in text communication feature so that the strategies and patterns of communication utilised by Valorant players can be observed. A short interview involving a few random players from the five games was also conducted to retrieve more data regarding the strategies and patterns of communication utilised by Valorant players. The findings suggest that not only do video game players often choose not to conform to existing grammatical and lexical rules, they also utilise vocabularies that only make sense in the scope of the game. In other words, linguistic deviations and neologism by giving existing words new meanings often occur in gaming language.

Keywords: Valorant, strategies, patterns, gaming language

Article history*Submitted:*
17 August 2022*Accepted:*
28 September 2022*Published:*
28 September 2022

Citation (APA Style):

Susanti, A. (2022). GG's and NT's: Gaming language in the chat feature of FPS game Valorant. *Diksi*, 30(2), 109-116. <https://doi.org/10.21831/diksi.v30i2.52660>.

INTRODUCTION

Playing games is a way for people to interact and connect with each other, learn a new language, and more (Thompson et al., 2014; Vazquez-Calvo, 2018). Blake (2011) has studied how video games, including multiplayer video games, can play an instrumental role in online language learning. Additionally, language is also used by players in video games to proclaim or perform their gender identities (Pearce, 2017). Therefore, it is no surprise that language and speech is used by video game players to communicate with each other, especially when the video game itself has an in-game chat feature.

One example of a massively played online multiplayer game with an in-game chat feature is Valorant. As of June 4th, 2022, according to the live monthly player tracker available on the site activeplayer.io, Valorant has an average of 15,252,011 monthly players despite only being released on June 2nd, 2020. Valorant is a first-person shooting game. A basic unrated game normally involves two teams: attackers and defenders, each of which consists of 5 players. Each player is to freely choose an agent or character to play, provided that each team member uses a different agent. Players are to choose a preferred agent, who comes with their own special abilities ('BEGINNER'S GUIDE', 2020). Attackers are tasked to plant and protect a slow-detonating timebomb called a spike at the bases, whereas defenders are tasked to either defuse the spike or eliminate all attackers before the spike is planted. After the 10th round, attackers and defenders switch roles in the game, and the first team to win a total of 13 rounds is then declared the winner.

In order for both teams to achieve this, a means of communication is required. Thus, the in-game chat feature of Valorant is an essential way for players to speak to other players in the same team or even in the opposing team, enabling them to coordinate strategies and movements with teammates (Skudder, 2021). A small text-chat box is implemented in the game on the bottom left of the screen, which can be used in between and during rounds. Any message from teammates or

opponents will automatically appear inside the box. To start typing out messages to teammates, a player would need to press the enter button on their keyboard. To start sending messages to specific friends, a player would need to press the tab button on their keyboard after pressing the enter button. To start typing out messages intended for both teammates and opponents, a player would need to press the shift and enter buttons. Once the message has been typed out, the enter key must be pressed again to send the message. Ultimately, players are able to communicate to teammates, specific friends, and also opponents using the in-game chat box.

However, with a new means of communication, also comes new strategies and patterns of communication. This paper aims to observe and examine the conversations taking place between players in the Valorant in-game chat box. The conversations will be studied to conclude the communication strategies and patterns that are utilised by players in the Valorant in-game chat box feature, and also to compare the language present in a gaming community compared to a more general setting. According to Ensslin (2012), there is a gap of studies regarding language use in video games despite them being a complex and highly-multifaceted form of media. Therefore, this study will help gain insight into how the language employed by first-person shooting video gamers are constructed and can become a base for future research regarding language use and formation in gaming.

A number of studies and publications regarding language use in gaming are used as the foundation for this research paper. Firstly, according to Ensslin (2012) in a book entitled *The Language of Gaming*, much like poets or authors, video gamers or participants of video games like to communicate without following the rules of grammar. For instance, they can change the word orders of a sentence, omit a few words, or use words in a grammatically inaccurate way. In other words, gamers often flaunt grammar or language rules deliberately.

Secondly, a study conducted by Bawa (2018) involved interviews of gamers and gameplay observations regarding the language utilised by Massively Multiplayer Online (MMO) game players. It was concluded that players find the ability to communicate with other players in-game beneficial for multiple reasons. The first reason being doing so can be mentally helpful because it helps them connect and socialise with friends. Secondly, players are able to deduce the current trending topics in the world based on the conversations they encounter. For example, the rise in politically saturated questions and conversations can inform a player of the current political climate of the world or the country they reside in. Thirdly, In-game conversations can serve as an escape for players since they have the ability to discuss topics outside of their responsibilities or work life. Last in the list of benefits of language in gaming, in-game conversations assist players in achieving certain goals in the game, and to do so, players have invented new abbreviations and ways of speaking that is less-time consuming yet still universally understandable. In-game conversations can also teach newer players about the mechanism and goals of the game and facilitate the learning and acquisition of a new language (Ryu, 2013). In a case study done by Ryu in 2013, it was found that players often “played games to learn English or they learned English to play games” (p. 292). Frequently occurring words relating to history and geography helped players understand more new vocabularies in English, with the assistance of dictionaries or other people.

Thirdly, word neologism also involves the formation of completely new words, the formation of new meanings for existing words, and the formation of new words that are derived from existing words (Liu & Liu, 2014), even in the scope of gaming or netspeak. In a study done by Liu & Liu in 2014 regarding neologism or word formation in a digital era, tactics for forming new words such as compounding, blending, affixation, acronymisation, conversion, and clipping can be done to form completely new-sounding words. The ways of forming new words as mentioned above are done by essentially manipulating morphemes. Since a morpheme contains the smallest meaningful unit (Tariq et al., 2020), they can be selected and combined easily, thus forming new words entirely.

From the four aforementioned literature regarding language in gaming and word formation or neologism, it can be concluded that language usage in gaming can serve multiple purposes at the same time: cultivating supportive relationships and engaging in a community, learning about the game itself, predicting current world trends, and escaping from the harshness of reality. The speakers or users of the so called “gaming language” also have the creative privileges to form new words and abbreviations, deviating from the correct grammatical and lexical rules of a language. However, despite the established knowledge regarding the uses of language in gaming, there is still a gap in

research regarding the strategies and patterns employed by video game players in their conversations. Thus, this study aims to explore and analyse this topic.

METHOD

Data collection

Data for this study were collected from five Valorant matches that the researcher has participated in. Each unrated (standard) match in Valorant consists of 13 to 26 rounds although a game that consists of less than 13 rounds can occur when a team surrenders to its opposing team. The team (regardless of role) that either manages to first win a total of 13 rounds or prompt the opposing team to surrender is considered the winner of the match. The team members of every game in Valorant are randomised using the built-in matchmaking system, although players can also invite one to four people, they know into the same team in a match by inviting them into a party. If a player invites less than four people into their party, then the built-in matchmaking system will pair the party with a random player to make sure each team has a total of five members.

The researcher retrieved every single player communication that took place in the in-game chat box in every round for a total of five matches. The first game lasted for a total of 23 rounds, the second game lasted for a total of 15 rounds, the third game lasted for a total of 13 rounds, the fourth game lasted for a total of 12 rounds, and the fifth game lasted for a total of 18 rounds.

Data were retrieved by taking screenshots of the entirety of the text communication occurring in matches via the in-game chat box. The researcher then compiled all the text communications along with all the player names and their agent names into one document for accessibility and readability. In addition, a short interview was conducted by firstly sending friend requests to a few random players that the researcher has come across in matches. Following this, the researcher then asked a few short questions to the few players who accepted the request and agreed to become an interviewee. The interview answers were then rewritten and compiled, and they served as further insight to the language used by Valorant players.

Only agent/character names will be used in this paper to refer to any players to ensure anonymity and to ensure continuity since some players opted to hide their usernames to other players, thus only revealing their agent names. The selectable agents in Valorant are Omen, Reyna, Raze, Brimstone, Viper, Sage, Neon, Fade, KAY/O, Skye, Breach, Sova, Phoenix, Yoru, Killjoy, Astra, Cypher, Chamber, and Jett.

Research design and data analysis

A qualitative research design is implemented for this study. The researcher made use of a research design similar to one previously used by (Debbagh, 2012; Roberts & Sarangi, 2005), with some modifications to fit into the scope of gaming and/or netspeak. In detail, the collected data that had been gathered from the in-game text feature and interviews and then compiled were re-read by the researcher. The researcher, then, drew any similarities between the conversations that took place in each game, with the help of the information provided by interviewees. The researcher then analysed every communication pattern or strategy utilised by each player when communicating via the in-game chat box. The description and usage of each found communication pattern and strategy are reported on the results section of this paper. Lastly, a summary is concluded from the entirety of the findings as the conclusion of this paper.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The use of word and phrase shortenings

Based on the transcripts obtained from five separate Valorant matches, it can be concluded that most players utilise word or phrase shortenings. Words are often abbreviated, and short phrases are often turned into acronyms, much like in other contexts of discourse outside of gaming (Grange & Bloom, 2007). Acronyms are defined as words created from the combination of all the first letters of each word in a phrase (The Britannica Dictionary, n.d.-b), whereas abbreviations are defined as words or names that has been shortened and used instead of their full counterparts (The Britannica Dictionary, n.d.-a). Below is a list of every acronym and abbreviation used by players along with its meaning or long version (in parentheses) and usage frequency.

nc (nice), 7 occurrences
 gg (good game), 6 occurrences
 nt (nice try), 6 occurrences
 mb (my bad), 2 occurrences
 op (Operator), 2 occurrences
 afk (away from keyboard), 2 occurrences
 fps (frames per second), 2 occurrences
 ty (thank you), 1 occurrence
 brim (Brimstone), 1 occurrence
 ulti (ultimate), 1 occurrence
 def (defence/defend), 1 occurrence
 noob (newbie), 1 occurrence
 wtf (what the fuck), 1 occurrence
 ggs (good games), 1 occurrence

A total of 14 different abbreviations and acronyms were utilised by players, with “nc”, “gg”, and “nt” as three of the most commonly used abbreviations and acronyms. These shortened versions of longer words or phrases are most likely utilised by high-stake video game players due to their ease of use and time-saving properties.

One of the players that have agreed to become an interviewee, Sage from game 3, has stated that “it is easier to type fast that way. This is especially important in Valo since you need to convey information fast”. In other words, in quick-paced video games that demand much focus and awareness such as Valorant, players often do not have the time or chance to communicate with teammates or other players using fully constructed words, phrases, or sentences. Players risk becoming vulnerable and attacked by enemies if they choose to hide or stop moving for a long time just to communicate with other players.

Shortenings are used even in between rounds because they are universally understood. When acronymised or abbreviated versions of words and phrases already carry the same meaning to most players, spelling words correctly or using full-length phrases are no longer necessary and can be viewed as redundant. Much like in general casual conversations, people no longer need to explain or spell out what they mean when they use universally accepted and understood abbreviations and acronyms such as “USA” or “EU”. In short, language continues to change and develop over time, adjusting with the needs of the user (Zefanya et al., 2019).

Moreover, most of the communication that took place in the five observed Valorant matches consisted of only three words or less per message line. Out of 170 lines retrieved from five Valorant matches, 141 of them consisted of 3 words or less. In other words, around 83% percent of the text communications occurring in Valorant were kept simple and short yet informative.

The use of game-specific vocabularies

Neologism occurs very often in the context of gaming (Zefanya et al., 2019). Neologism is defined as the creation of new words or the creation of new definitions for existing words (Johnston, 2021). Both video game developers and video game players make use of specific words that only make sense in the context of certain games. For example, from examining the words used in the player text communication that took place during Valorant matches, there are a total of 18 existing words that have been given new meanings in the context of the game. For example, the letters “a”, “b”, and “c”, when mentioned during a Valorant match, would most likely refer to the three zones in the maps of the game.

(Game 2) Reyna: a
 (Game 2) Jett: b
 (Game 1) Omen: c

These excerpts are all examples of players indicating where enemies are located, and that their teammates should follow the player to that zone.

The weapons featured in Valorant are named after existing words. “Vandal” and “Operator” are the names of a rifle and a sniper rifle, respectively. The selectable agents, as mentioned in text communications, are also named after existing words with existing meanings, such as Chamber, Brimstone, Phoenix, Sage, and Omen. Additionally, one of the ways to win an unrated match in Valorant is to successfully plant or defuse a timebomb called a spike. The word “spike”, as with other words mentioned above, would usually convey different meanings in general contexts outside of the Valorant game. The words “vandal”, “spike”, and “sage”, when mentioned in a more general conversation, would more likely mean “a person who destroys things”, “a sharp protruding piece of material”, or “a kind of herb”. In summary, based on the conversations that took place in the Valorant in-game chat box, video game developers and players both make use of existing words by assigning them completely new meanings (Zefanya et al., 2019).

Types of messages

The built-in text communication method in the game exists to accommodate players in communicating with each other, which means there are reasons why players need to send messages to other players. As previously mentioned, Valorant’s in-game chat box serves as a good way for players to stay connected with one another. Much like communicating through SMS, players are able to coordinate, give information, ask questions, compliment and insult, and express personal news using the chat feature (Ling, 2005). A few sample excerpts of each type of communication can be seen below.

Giving information:

- (Game 3) Fade: someone coming from b
- (Game 3) Sage: theyre defusing
- (Game 4) Fade: seems like they like to go to A lately

Asking questions:

- (Game 1) Reyna: SAGE?
- (Game 4) Fade: should we surrender
- (Game 5) Yoru: sova you are from bd?

Giving commands or requests:

- (Game 1) Omen: FOLLOW ME
- (Game 3) Brimstone: plant here
- (Game 4) Skye: get my operator sova

Complimenting and insulting:

- (Game 1) Reyna: (referring to Sage) NEWBIE
- (Game 3) Fade: its ok you did well
- (Game 5) Yoru: they are so noob

Expressing personal news:

- (Game 2) Reyna: i need vandal
- (Game 3) Brimstone: im also low fps
- (Game 5) Viper: im lagging so bad im sorry

Linguistic deviations

Linguistic deviations are defined by Dhyaningrum (2020) as a device used by writers to diverge from the conventions of everyday speech by deliberately deviating from language rules. This can include both grammatical and lexical rules. In the context of video-gaming, these deviations occur accidentally and deliberately.

Accidental deviations usually occur in the form of mistyping due to the pressing of incorrect letter keys on the keyboard, which are often adjacent to the correct ones. According to a Valorant player who goes by the name Catboysjar, “Valorant is an intense game that requires fast movement, I don’t really have the time to type out words and that leads to typing in a rush basically. Just a quick

and short words that everyone understand is enough”. To rephrase, accidental typographical errors often occur due to the lack of time to ensure proper communication, which is caused by the fast-paced nature of the video game itself. Typing their messages in a small window of time forces the players to overlook any grammatical or lexical errors that occur due to mistyping.

On the other hand, grammatical and lexical deviations can also be done deliberately, often for the purpose of accelerating the process of typing and communication or adding specific additional nuance to messages. For example, punctuation marks such as the apostrophe and question marks are almost always omitted when communicating using the in-game chat box because it speeds up the process of asking or giving information, and hardly ever causes confusion. According to Catboysjar, “‘im’ is a lot faster to type out (than ‘I’m’), especially when you’re under a time limit. Having to use apostrophes will take more time than needed”.

In other instances, in addition to the previous intended use of lexical deviations, a spelling deviation done for added nuance such as the example below also occurred.

(Game 5) Raze: im lagging so bad im sowwy.

Other than the omission of apostrophe, it can also be seen that the word “sorry” is intentionally mistyped as “sowwy” to add a cute nuance to the message. “Sowwy” (or “sowwie”) is an internet and texting slang often used as another way of saying sorry with the added childish or cute nuance (MikkiMassacre, 2009; S, 2008; Sood, 2007).

In short, in Valorant, both accidental and deliberate lexical and grammatical deviations are mostly done when rounds commence because both accidental lexical and grammatical deviations usually cannot be rid of entirely by video game players due to the fast-paced nature of the first-person shooting game. Deliberate lexical and grammatical deviations are deliberately done for reasons of convenience and simplification. Thus, these kinds of deviations are also very difficult to avoid entirely. As language is mainly created by the users of language for the users of language as well, neologisms done in the form of lexical and grammatical deviations are unavoidable, even in the context of gaming or online-based conversations.

CONCLUSIONS

In the linguistic domain, understanding the importance of gaming language and neologism can provide further insight into why, how, when, and what kind of words are created by the people who form and use them, in the scope in which they are used. After all, language is constantly changing, and words continue to be made and used differently from time to time, in different contexts. More studies regarding internet and gaming language continue to be written and published to further observe the creative license that propels new words to be made and used in the scope of gaming and netspeak, this one being one of them. A few enlightening findings have been concluded from this study conducted based on gaming conversations.

Based on the text conversations that took place during the five observed Valorant matches, it can be concluded that that fast-paced video game players utilise a number of communication strategies to ensure fast yet effective exchanges. Players make use of word and phrase shortenings, game-specific vocabularies, and linguistic deviations to communicate with various intentions such as giving information, asking questions, giving commands and requests, complimenting and insulting, and expressing personal news. Word and phrase shortenings, along with the intentional omission of punctuation marks are often utilised by players when communicating to each other to save time. Vocabulary specific to the Valorant video game is also inevitably used in players’ communication because game developers use existing words for new purposes by giving them completely new meanings in the context of the video game. Ultimately, fast-paced video game players often do not conform to the constraints of language rules when communicating with other players since the continuity and progression of their matches are of outmost priority. As long as the messages are mutually comprehensible, they are deemed effective communication.

Further research regarding language use in gaming can be done with the findings of this study as a base since there is a big gap of research regarding gaming language outside the scope of language learning and acquisition. However, the limitations of this study also need to be addressed. The data were only retrieved from a small number of matches of one video game albeit involving different

players. All of the text conversation data collected during all five games only involve exchanges between players of the same team. The small amount of data used as the object of analysis is meant to represent the language use in video-gaming, however the scope of the study might still be viewed as limited. A study observing a broader scope of players from different demographics, or a study observing teammate-teammate and teammate-opponent exchanges can be done to obtain more accurate findings regarding how players of the same game or the same kind of game communicate with each other. A broader study involving various types of video games also needs to be conducted to obtain more conclusive results regarding the strategies and patterns of language use in gaming. Additionally, a more extensive interview involving more interviewees can also be done to further ensure the accuracy of the findings regarding the reasons behind the text communication strategies and patterns utilised in gaming language.

REFERENCES

- Bawa, P. (2018). Massively multiplayer online gamers' language: Argument for an M-gamer corpus. *The Qualitative Report*. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2018.3119>.
- BEGINNER'S GUIDE. (2020, February 6). *Riot Games*. <https://playvalorant.com/en-us/news/announcements/beginners-guide/>.
- Blake, R. J. (2011). Current trends in online language learning. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 31, 19–35. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S026719051100002X>.
- Debbagh, M. (2012). Discourse analysis of the representations of women in Moroccan broadcast news. *The Journal of North African Studies*, 17(4), 653–670. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13629387.2012.685248>.
- Dhyaningrum, A. (2020). Linguistic deviation and techniques of translation in Spring of Kumari Tears. *Journal of Language and Literature*, 20(2), 344. <https://doi.org/10.24071/joll.v20i2.2651>.
- Ensslin, A. (2012). *The language of gaming* (1. publ). Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-230-35708-2>.
- Grange, B., & Bloom, D. A. (2007). Acronyms, abbreviations and initialisms: ACRONYMS and INITIALISMS. *BJU International*, 86(1), 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1464-410x.2000.00717.x>.
- Johnston, I. (2021). *Neologisms and their use in gaming communities*. https://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2409&context=gs_rp.
- Ling, R. (2005). The sociolinguistics of SMS: An analysis of SMS use by a random sample of Norwegians. In *Mobile Communications* (pp. 335–349). Springer-Verlag. https://doi.org/10.1007/1-84628-248-9_22.
- Liu, W., & Liu, W. (2014). Analysis on the word-formation of English netspeak neologism. *Journal of Arts and Humanities*, 3(12), 22–30. <https://doi.org/doi.org/10.18533/journal.v3i12.624>.
- MikkiMassacre. (2009). Sowwie. In *Urbandictionary.com Dictionary*. <https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=sowwy>.
- Pearce, A. M. (2017). Exploring performance of gendered identities through language in *World of Warcraft*. *International Journal of Human-Computer Interaction*, 33(3), 180–189. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10447318.2016.1230965>.
- Roberts, C., & Sarangi, S. (2005). Theme-oriented discourse analysis of medical encounters. *Medical Education*, 39(6), 632–640. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2929.2005.02171.x>.
- Ryu, D. (2013). Play to learn, learn to play: Language learning through gaming culture. *ReCALL*, 25(2), 286–301. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0958344013000050>.
- S, M. (2008). Sowwie. In *Urbandictionary.com Dictionary*. <https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=sowwy>.

- Skudder, J. (2021, October 5). Valorant: How to team chat and all chat (complete guide). *GIVEMESPORT*. <https://www.givemesport.com/1763476-valorant-how-to-team-chat-and-all-chat-complete-guide>.
- Sood, R. (2007). Sowwy. In *Urbandictionary.com Dictionary*. <https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=sowwy>.
- Tariq, T. R., Rana, M. A., Sultan, B., Asif, M., Rafique, N., & Aleem, S. (2020). An analysis of derivational and inflectional morphemes. *International Journal of Linguistics*, 12(1), 83. <https://doi.org/10.5296/ijl.v12i1.16084>.
- The Britannica Dictionary. (n.d.-a). Abbreviation. In *Britannica.com Dictionary*. Retrieved 10 June 2022, from <https://www.britannica.com/dictionary/abbreviation>.
- The Britannica Dictionary. (n.d.-b). Acronym. In *Britannica.com Dictionary*. Retrieved 10 June 2022, from <https://www.britannica.com/dictionary/acronym>.
- Thompson, M. D., Meldrum, K., & Sellwood, J. (2014). ‘... it is not just a game’: Connecting with culture through traditional indigenous games. *American Journal of Educational Research*, 2(11), 1015–1022. <https://doi.org/10.12691/education-2-11-3>.
- Vazquez-Calvo, B. (2018). The online ecology of literacy and language practices of a gamer. *Journal of Educational Technology & Society*, 21(3), 199–212.
- Zefanya, C. A., Sanusi, G. S., & Lesmana, D. F. (2019). Word formation of neologism found in various gaming communities on subreddit. *ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE: THEIR CONTEMPORARY ROLES*, 51–57. <https://repository.usd.ac.id/36248/1/ELUC3%202019%20PROCEEDINGS.pdf#page=60>.