

# Part of Your World: Linguistic Indicators of Immersion in Video Games

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Immersion is a highly sought-after goal within the video games industry. Current measures of immersion are often invasive (e.g. Geelan, 2017), take specialist equipment (eye tracking) (e.g. Streicher et al., 2018), or rely on subjective measures (or a combination of these) (e.g. Johnson et al., 2018). In this paper, I intend to demonstrate that language is the key to measuring immersion real time without the need for special equipment or for participants to do any more than they would during a normal play session.

Using discourse analysis alongside mental space (Fauconnier, 1994), cognitive domain (Sweetser and Fauconnier, 1996) and conceptual blending theories (Fauconnier and Turner, 1998), I explore the language use of a group of Canadian Let's Players active on YouTube as they play through comparable games in the action adventure genre (Uncharted, Tomb Raider). I explore how the conceptualisation of character or avatar as an extension of the self can show player interest in the narrative of the game, loss of distinction between real and play worlds and thus their overall enjoyment and immersion in the game experience.

Preliminary analysis of the data shows that, where a player has a higher rate of immersion in a game, they are more likely to refer to a character in the first person, to use the character as the deictic centre for spatial reference, and to use expressions that treat character rather than player as Ego. This will be a direct result of a conceptual blend between the player and the character, as already seen in earlier research (Tea and Lee, 2004). It is further hypothesised that, in instances where immersion is broken, the pattern of reference will change to take on a more character-as-other standpoint.

It is hoped that this research is not only a benefit to an industry that is continuing to grow as a way to test and assess their games prior to release, but also to show the practical applications of cognitive linguistic research outside the discipline. This research can also add to our understanding of cognitive focus, interest and enjoyment in general, and how language is used to express our conceptual understandings of the real, digital and intermingled worlds in adult pretend play.

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