

PSYCHOLINGUISTIC MECHANISMS OF INTENSIFICATION OF GAME SLANG

Abstract. The article reviews psycholinguistic mechanisms of emotional intensification of game slang in digital communication. The relevance of the work is determined by the growing popularity of digital communication and the necessity of the effective interpretation of its emotional aspects. Game slang is analyzed as a distinct type of expressive vocabulary.

In the framework of psycholinguistic approach, key mechanisms of emotional intensification including context, cognitive frames and multimodality are analyzed. It is revealed that expressive elements of game slang are capable of activating an emotional response on a precognitive level, increasing the engagement of the participants of communication.

In the conclusion of the article, game slang is interpreted as an instrument of emotional and cognitive optimization of communication and broaden the understanding of expressive vocabulary functions in digital environment and emphasize the perspective of further digital discourse research

Keywords: Game slang, emotional intensification, psycholinguistics, expressive vocabulary, cognitive frames, multimodality, digital discourse.

In our modern world of computerization, a large chunk of communication is moved to digital space. The problem with that, is the difficulty of expressing emotions to allow a successful interaction. This is where we now use various means to get our message across: memes, emojis and slang. However, there are areas where only certain types of communication can be employed, therefore, it is important to utilize psycholinguistic mechanisms of intensification.

In areas like games, we usually think about the graphic means that paint the main picture; however, the story is narrated through texts. Therefore, slang becomes the main mechanism of communication and user engagement.

Slang is a colloquial layer of language often used in daily life communication and is considered by some scholars a lower register. It may be so, however, with the development of language slang penetrates in various spheres of life more and more. We use slang even for our jobs, this type of slang is called professional jargon. Different social groups use their own slang, student slang, historical, youth, gamer slang and many more. Therefore, slang becomes an essential part of our lives and denying its value is unreasonable [2 p.536, 4 p.23, 7 p.130].

As a colloquial type of speech, slang is much more expressive than neutral lexical units, therefore its frequent use in games and social media is justified. Characteristic trait of slang is that one lexical unit can be used in a wide variety of contexts, which makes it a versatile segment of speech for entertainment industry, where contexts vary.

As we have mentioned, slang is a very supple layer of language and therefore, as there might be units the user does not yet know, the context surrounding it helps to process it cognitively. This tandem allows to use less words to describe a certain scene in the narration, or use compression. Compression in linguistics is a process of “squeezing” a bulky meaning in a short form, which is perfect for games, where it is obligatory, as a massive number of words cannot fit in a small space of a phone or a computer screen. Additionally, with the reducing attention span of modern generations in general, it would be counter active to increasing engagement in a game, which is not the goal [11].

Speaking about cognitive processing, we have to mention cognitive frames. A frame is a development of a certain concept that fits the topic, that directs the interpretation of the audience. It



has to be noted that though frames create a sort of “collective thinking”, they can operate on an individual level as well, as a thought process or an analogy. These traits will be stored inside of a person’s mind, so when they encounter a lexical unit some other time, they will have a certain view of it already. We can say it is a mental space that represents a system of concepts withing a single part of the picture of the world. It may have subframes and hierarchies. Frames are the most important schemes for systematizing the knowledge of reality in a person’s mind, reflecting their picture of the world [1, 3, 9]. We can visualize it as a bookcase in the library of our mind. Each time we encounter a concept that we have already conceptualized, we reread a book from its shelf.

Consequently, a game can be a proper field for forming such a “library” as it would not only provide the opportunity for filling of the “bookcases”, but also develop a variety of emotions that can be linked to these concepts. This can serve as a great way of education on early stages of life. Additionally, as games provide the entertainment it can be viewed as a passive education for adults, and will not present a heavy mental load on them especially after a long day of work.

Furthermore, games can provide an opportunity for adults to improve their knowledge of language with the language structures often used in daily life instead of academic environment, that can boost their understanding of the speakers and facilitate the communication. It is worth mentioning that the speed with which the person enhances their skills is in direct ration with the connection of various types of perception. Modern games often provide a picture, subtitles or text of the narration and voice overs of it, which is scientifically proved to be a more effective approach to learning [10].

In the framework of the psycholinguistic approach, special significance is reserved for the ability of the slang lexical units to initiate an emotional response from the recipient. In relation to that, game slang presents a specific type of vocabulary in which the meaning of the lexeme is connected with its affection on the recipient.

Expressive language units in the game compared with neutral means function as triggers activating emotional response on a precognitive level, omitting full analytical interpretation. This is determined by a high frequency of their use in emotionally abundant situations and with the fixed evaluative expressions connected to them.

Context that determined the level of emotional expressiveness, alongside it, plays a significant role in the operation of game slang. From the perspective of psycholinguistics, the meaning of the lexical unit is not fixed but is formed during interaction with the relevant context and already existent cognitive frames of the person.

Game discourse is a highly dynamic level of language, which only increases the importance of context: the same lexical units can acquire different emotional intensity depending on the scenario of the game [12].

As we have mentioned earlier in the article, there are different types of expressive means for communication. Consequently, the intensification of slang can be performed by using these means in tandem with slang. It helps form create emotion by organizing vague body sensations and sensory cues into specific emotion categories like happiness, anger, fear etc. Consequently, emotionally expressive vocabulary not only activates cognitive frames, as we have mentioned earlier, but draws attention to relevant sensations and can make an obscure emotional experience “pop out” in consciousness [Lindquist].

Most effective approach has always been audiovisual approach, meaning that text is used with its audio version, which activates the multimodal perception. Hence why, the games are often voiced by professional voice actors, that conduct a meticulous analysis of their parts and overall narration to produce the most fitting emotion that correlates with the text. Additionally to the audio, emojis and graphical signs like “~” and quite common on social media “)”, “(” can be used [6].

Summing up, we can mention the most effective mechanisms of emotional intensification of game slang: slang on its own presents an emotionally imbued element and is an essential part of



everyday speech; cognitive frames present a systematized hierarchy of emotions and analogies inside a person's mind that allows for a more effective perception in the future; multimodal perception is a mental process of using multiple sensory organs to provide the most effective understanding and memorization, often used in education. Thus, game slang can be interpreted as an instrument of emotional and cognitive optimization of communication balancing the compression of the language and high level of expressiveness. The conclusions allow us to widen our understanding of how mechanisms of the expressive vocabulary in digital spaces and highlight the necessity of further research of psycholinguistic aspects of online communication.

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