

# **Controversy in a time of change**

An analysis of gaming discourse on Reddit

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This thesis explores the discourse surrounding videogames on the online forum Reddit r/gaming. The aim of the thesis was to analyse how video game discourse reflects the views, interests and values of those who participate in it. The material was text data from two of the most commented posts from the year 2024, which were then formatted into corpora. The corpora were edited to remove personal identifiers and duplicates. The purpose of the research was to study video game discourse and its prevalent themes. Results of the research were that personal values and ideologies are prevalent in video game discourse. Another theme was the discourse surrounding what makes a game good or successful. The divide between those in the hobby and those in the industry was also a point of conflict.

**Key words:** Gaming Discourse, Corpus-Based Linguistics, Astro Bot, Concord

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## 1 Introduction

Throughout the years, gaming as both a hobby and an industry has grown to a mainstream media rivalling the more traditional forms such as movies, tv and music. In just 2022, the global revenue earned by the gaming industry was more than those of music and movies combined, with the gaming industry making roughly \$184.4 billion, overtaking both music at \$26.2 billion and movies at \$26 billion (Forbes). Yet, despite this growth, games are still relatively under researched in academia, especially considering the size of the industry and the growth of the hobby. The reasons for this vary, but the general consensus is that videogames are not often taken seriously (Newman 2004, 1). As more and more people find their way into gaming, the sheer amount of discussion surrounding games has grown significantly and as such will naturally be intertwined with current day culture and politics. Gaming in general is starting to become much more accessible to the average person than before, as there are nearly limitless opportunities to interact with the media. This growth in audience alongside the growth of the internet in general leads to discussions surrounding games being common and widespread, whether it is on the news, social media or even online forums.

This growth in diversity, popularity and accessibility has started a paradigm shift in the gaming industry, where the previous norm of gaming as the hobby of exclusively young men is starting to fade (Cote 2021, 24). As games reach wider audiences, it will naturally reach minorities of all kinds as well. Due to the nature of games being a form of media one can easily indulge in within their own comfortable spaces, it can be an inviting hobby for those that face discrimination or have a hard time fitting in. This contradiction of how gaming is seen, versus how it can be, is one of the main reasons why games deserve more attention in academia. As many of those that found themselves in the hobby will likely continue onwards to work in the industry, to help make games that represent them. However, for those that identify strongly with the more historical representation of a gamer, this change is unwelcome. They can potentially see this new wave of inclusivity and representation as a challenge or a threat to their place in power as the normative gamer. The representation of others might make them feel as if they are being driven away from their hobby, likely leading to much negativity that will be visible in discourse.

In this thesis, I am going to conduct a critical discourse analysis on online gaming discussions, in order to find how these norms are conveyed. To be more specific, I examine

how gamers are reacting to this shift in the industry and to how their status is dwindling? Furthermore, my analysis will focus on how gaming discussions turn into political discussions. The discourse will likely show the personal beliefs, norms and biases of those partaking in it. It will be especially important to find why gaming discourse specifically reflects current day issues.

## **2 Theoretical background**

In this section I will be going over fundamentally important background information regarding the thesis. The section is divided into three subsections, covering gaming in academia, the theoretical framework of the thesis and lastly, gaming in history.

### **2.1 Gaming in academia**

Academic research surrounding games is starting to be relatively common, with there being numerous ways to analyse them. One of the most well-known studies surrounding video games is whether they cause violence or aggressive behaviour, especially among younger audiences (C. Anderson and Bushman 2001). Additionally, a large majority of research is focused on the economical aspects of games, either regarding marketing (Marchand and Henning-Thurau 2013) or transactions (Palmeira 2021). Another seemingly common field of research regarding games is focused on human behaviour such as social interactions (Gonçalves et al. 2021). By comparison, linguistic research in the field of gaming is smaller, with most of the research surrounding on the language used within video games (Ensslin 2012; Ensslin and Balteiro 2019a), like in-game text or voice chats, often focusing on code-switching and lingo, and on language learning through video games (Hung et al. 2018).

Finding previous research on gaming discourse analysis was relatively difficult. However, those that I was able to find did focus on societal issues like my thesis, with one example study analysing articles on the accessibility of games and the language surrounding it (S. Anderson 2022). There does seem to be a clear gap in research for my thesis, as there does not seem to be many studies on gaming discourse in online forums. A discourse analysis based on forum discussion should show how those interested in the industry and hobby actually talk about it.

### **2.2 Theory**

For my analysis, I will be utilizing critical discourse analysis, often referred to as CDA. This approach is suitable for my research, as it is effective when trying to find how power is conveyed in text. This is especially important in my research, as I focus on norms and political leanings in a time of change in gaming, expecting to find struggles of power and norms in the discourse. Fairclough simplifies CDA as a framework that “looks to establish connections between properties of texts, features of discourse practice (text production,

consumption and distribution), and wider sociocultural practice” (1995, 87). In this thesis, I am interested in what makes a game good and why games fail, and how this is manifested in online discussions, especially in the form of divisive and polarized language use (van Dijk 2024).

While Fairclough’s model of CDA is the basis of my research, approaches to discourse analysis on games and gaming will be used as well. This includes the work of Ensslin and Balteiro, as their work in discourse analysis is similar to the goals of my own research. They describe videogames as “affinity spaces”, where people of all kinds of backgrounds around the world come together due to a shared interest (Ensslin and Balteiro 2019b, 1). Furthermore, these spaces hold a great deal of personal ideologies that may affect how those individuals see things both within and outside them (ibid.). While this thesis does not focus on the language *within* games, it is important to understand the nature of discourse *related to* games, as there is a large amount of intertextuality in gaming discourse. Ensslin and Balteiro (2019b) summarize that game discourse:

relates to the language and multimodal designs of games themselves, as well as to paratexts such as instruction manuals, end-user license agreements (EULAs), fora, blurbs and games advertising. Games as cultural artifacts communicate meanings via user interfaces, audiovisual character design, backstories, instructions, and scripted dialogues[.] (Ensslin and Balteiro 2019b, 3)

### **2.3 Gaming in history**

Gaming or, to be more specific, video gaming as a medium has come a long way from its roots of having dedicated arcade halls equipped with coin-operated machines. Multiple significant events have snowballed gaming into a mainstream place among media. This is partially due to the increased popularity and acceptance of nerd culture in general. With this increase in popularity, those who have found themselves in the culture earlier may often feel threatened and start to flout their knowledge of the subject.

Amanda Cote’s research focuses on how modern game audiences have expanded from the norm of your typical gamer, encompassing more than just young men (2021, 2). Her research

is fitting for my thesis, as her studies focus on how minorities are treated in gaming circles, and how this new era of gaming and its increase in accessibility causes friction between traditional audiences and new ones, referred to as “core” and “casual” (Cote 2021, 25). Due to the nature of video games as a highly intertextual form of media, there can be a significant difference in knowledge between people discussing it, those with more status through their knowledge of the subject will likely look down on the newer or more casual gamers. Quite often, this engrained attitude of superiority will further drive a wedge between core and casual audiences, those belonging to the core will see the casuals as uninterested while the casuals will find the environment curated by the core audience as uninviting. Cote speaks of these attitudes of hate, such as those faced by gamers different from the established norm, especially gender, racial and sexual minorities (2021, 2). Current gaming communities are characterized by this often unwelcoming attitude, as those individuals that find themselves in a place of power resist the change, mostly by outing those that are different through hate. The place of power that men have in gaming is not something that is entirely new, as noted in Cote’s research as “a variety of forces have constructed video games as something meant more for men than for women” (2021, 3). While these forces are much less noticeable in today’s day and age, there is still an argument to be made that gaming is characterized as a masculine hobby, with many game studios accepting the assumption that most gamers are men, and therefore pandering to their expectations. Furthermore, game studios and publishers contributed to the divide, as games for women would be made as their own separate genre, giving flawed representation (Cote 2021, 5).

### **3 Material and methods**

This section of the thesis will explain the material and methods. The material subsection will explain the choice of material and how it is relevant to the thesis. The methods subsection seeks to explain the steps taken to make the material into useful information which will be used in the analysis section later in the thesis.

#### **3.1 Material**

As the aim of this thesis is to study discourse surrounding videogames, the choice of platform was difficult. Many forums related to videogames are often splintered, divided into various points of interest, usually focusing on one game or one genre. By comparison, news surrounding videogames often lack a section to comment on or have very little participation. However, Reddit was a suitable website to find discourse on gaming. Reddit is an online forum where registered users can post within their own curated communities called subreddits, they can also rate other's posts and comment on them. To find the most generalized discussion on gaming related news and events, I chose the subreddit r/gaming. This subreddit represents a large amount of people interested in gaming, with 46.7 million members around the world as of May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2025 (GummySearch). Furthermore, the subreddit has no specific leaning to any specific games or platforms, which keeps the content varied and relevant to most people. The subreddit r/gaming has been studied before by Massanari (2015, 2017) and Maloney, Roberts and Graham (2019, 6-7) who labelled the subreddit as a natural home for the hobby online while taking into account how the userbase reflects those in the hobby, them being the majority white men.

To find fitting discourse for my study, I looked through the most popular posts of 2024, placing emphasis on the number of comments. Posts which discussed media based on videogames were excluded, as they lean more towards a critique of their own respective industries. The most commented posts were quite expectedly on gaming news that could be seen as divisive or controversial. These posts were particularly large discursive events because of this.

While it is the largest platform for gaming discussion online, Reddit does have some issues as a source in research, as it has both site-wide moderation and subreddit moderators. This leads to several comments being labelled as either removed or deleted, as whatever was said was either against the guidelines of Reddit or subreddit. Most of the time, these comments contain

hateful speech such as slurs, which is why they were removed. However, users can also delete messages by their own accord, delete their entire account, or get removed from Reddit entirely. Reddit is largely a western platform, and as such the posts and comments mostly represent a western view of the world.

For my material I chose the two most commented posts from the subreddit r/gaming from the top posts of 2024. The posts had roughly 21 400 comments in total. Furthermore, as Reddit is a platform where you must be a registered user to contribute, it is safe to assume that those who partake in discussions are interested in gaming. It should be noted that Reddit posts that gain large amounts of traction can go on to the “popular” page, accessible by anyone. This can cause the engagement of a post to go above the norm, as it will reach users outside of the original community’s users. These posts were chosen due to their large number of comments, which directly shows that they were meaningful discursive events worth analysing. Most of the posts were based on news regarding the gaming industry, alongside posts about gaming in general. The subreddit is focused on discussions and news, as meme templates and low-effort posts are not allowed.

Reddit was the primary data source for two key ethical reasons (Proferes, Jones and Zimmer 2021). Firstly, Reddit is an online platform accessible by anyone, even without a dedicated user account. Secondly, the platform is mostly anonymous as its users are expected to go by usernames. Additionally, it is against the rules of the platform to disclose personally identifying or identifiable information (Reddit 2024), even regarding the user themselves, as there is no way to verify that information, nor its source. Most importantly, the anonymity of the users is guaranteed as this thesis relies purely on corpus analysis. Similar to Hekanaho et al. (2024), no personally identifying, nor identifiable information, such as usernames, was included in the data and no specific user comments are included in this thesis to prevent anyone from searching for the comments. The thesis therefore conforms to the guidelines set by Finnish National Board on Research Integrity (TENK 2019).

The first post I chose was due to it having the most comments of all posts from the year 2024, with 12 000 comments. The post was titled “ASTRO BOT wins GAME OF THE YEAR at The Game Awards 2024”. Astro Bot is a platforming game made by Team Asobi, published by Sony Interactive Entertainment for their Playstation 5 console. The Game Awards is an annual awards ceremony for videogames, and it is the largest of its kind, with over 154 million global livestreams (The Game Awards, n.d.) This post likely gathered much attention

from users due to many having their own personal thoughts on why Astro Bot should have won or not. The corpus of the comments has a token size of 319 523.

The second post I chose for my research was titled “CONCORD will be taken offline Sept 6. Sales will cease and refunds will be issued[...]” . Concord was a short-lived hero shooter game made by Firewalk Studios, published by Sony Interactive Entertainment for the Playstation 5 and PC. The post had a total of 9 400 comments, leaving it only second to the post mentioned above. The number of comments was primarily due to discourse regarding why the game failed, leading to its early shutdown. While it is interesting to see that Sony Interactive Entertainment is the publisher behind two of the games in this analysis, it bears no correlation to the choice to pick these two posts. The corpus has a token size of 240 983.

### **3.2 Methods**

With the gathered text corpora from the posts, I will analyse common keywords and look for collocations, which is an established practice in the field of corpus linguistics (O’Keeffe and McCarthy 2022). I utilize this approach to conduct discourse analysis (Friginal and Hardy 2021), focusing on controversial topics, such as politics, gender, sexuality and race. Other points of friction in discourse may also appear, such as qualms with the gaming industry in general. This corpus-based approach also serves as a way to obfuscate the texts analysed, as there are no identifiers such as usernames. Each corpus has every comment from the respective post, after the removal of duplicates. In order to keep the analysis concise, I will analyse both corpora individually at first and then look at an overview of prevalent themes. The main research question is to find how power, values and norms are conveyed in the discourse. Due to the nature of Reddit as a platform, directly and explicitly hateful speech has obviously been removed by moderation, which is why the remaining comments provide for more interesting analysis, as they will have veiled their hate through indirect and implicit language use.

In accordance with research ethics, the gathered comment texts from every post were edited to remove usernames. Then, I cleaned up the data by removing duplicates and unnecessary text such as site features, date and time, up and downvotes and commenting tools.

To know what to look for in the corpus-based analysis, a rough overview of each post's comments will be necessary. For this approach, I sorted comments by top, meaning those that were highest rated by other users, and by controversial, meaning those that had many rating

instances both up and down. Furthermore, in the process of gathering all of the text data, I had the perfect opportunity to get glances at comments from throughout the post.

Each corpus was analysed to find important keywords by observing the word frequencies in AntConc, a corpus linguistics software. To keep the data relevant and clean, I used the PubMed stopword list with some modifications to account for punctuation, which removes many unnecessary tokens such as articles (see Appendix 1). The analysis process started by gathering the 100 most frequent tokens in the corpus, from which keywords were selected. These were analysed both in their own context, where results were sorted by frequency. Another form of keyword analysis that was utilised is collocation, where tokens with a minimum frequency of 10, within 7 tokens in both reading directions of the keyword are ranked by likelihood. The discourse surrounding these keywords was then further investigated. The aim of this is to potentially find a common aspect of discourse prevalent in gaming discussions as the key research question is to see how and why personal beliefs and values come up in gaming discourse. Furthermore, the relationship between those in the industry of making games and those who consume them is expected to be quite visible in the discourse. I am expecting to see friction and a sense of disconnection between the two.

## 4 Analysis

The analysis section will be divided into 2 subsections, one for each of the reddit post corpora. Each corpus will be analysed by finding the most common keywords through word frequency lists on AntConc, after which the context surrounding those words will be investigated, to see what prevalent discourse themes appear in the texts. In the case of keywords that are expected to go together, such as astro and bot, referring to the game Astro Bot, the one with a higher frequency will be selected. In addition, the background context of chosen keywords will be explained if necessary. The top 100 most frequent tokens in each corpus will be shown in a figure for clarity, ordered from top to bottom, left to right. The results of the analysis as a whole will be delved into further in the discussion section.

### 4.1 The Astro Bot corpus

In the Astro Bot corpus, I was expecting to find many opinionated texts surrounding games and the games industry, as the post was about a controversial winner for game of the year 2024. Many commenters felt that the win was either rigged or unfair, as there were many mentions of other nominees and the corporate nature of the event. This was likely the main drive for many to comment on the results of the event and voice their opinions on the award winner. The 100 most frequent tokens seemed to reflect this hypothesis, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. 100 most frequent tokens in the Astro Bot corpus

Word	Freq	Word	Freq	Word	Freq	Word	Freq
game	6135	lol	549	balatro	346	feel	240
games	2312	great	544	playing	331	controller	235
year	1721	time	518	point	326	haven	234
people	1438	dlc	502	actually	323	different	231
astro	1405	awards	494	literally	322	ff	231
goty	1347	exclusive	489	gamers	321	probably	231
play	1179	heard	485	deserved	314	yes	231
bot	1159	better	480	sure	313	sold	230
good	1086	award	443	thing	309	buy	223
one	1052	say	439	love	308	sales	220
ps	1010	console	414	nominated	299	makes	218
played	999	mean	405	right	286	going	217
won	982	see	399	gameplay	285	platformers	217
think	911	playstation	391	bad	282	lmao	212
wukong	906	lot	382	metaphor	281	story	212
win	878	way	377	black	276	vote	211
fun	691	platformer	372	pretty	270	player	210
best	678	new	370	winning	265	least	208
mario	648	years	369	players	261	full	206
sony	634	elden	362	need	254	video	206
astrobot	621	nintendo	362	opinion	253	quality	204
know	615	ring	360	myth	252	super	201
pc	608	yeah	360	want	252	exclusives	200
well	594	saying	359	maybe	251	big	198
gaming	565	first	347	shit	244	rebirth	198

The intertextual nature of gaming discourse was made readily apparent by multiple mentions of other nominees, games of similar genres aka platformers, and even comparisons to previous award winners. My initial survey led me to further analyse certain keywords to study discourse surrounding Astro Bot and other nominated games, expecting to find how gamers compare what constitutes an award well earned. The keywords chosen for this were ‘astro’, ‘wukong’, ‘dlc’, ‘elden’, ‘balatro’, ‘metaphor’ and ‘ff’. All of these keywords refer to game of the year award nominees. I will go on to analyse these keywords in context.

Astro, referring to the award-winner Astro Bot (Team Asobi 2024), was surrounded by much controversy and comparison. Discourse surrounding its win was divisive, with many users considering the game to be undeserving for a multitude of reasons, with the most prevalent ones being platform exclusivity, meaning it was only available on Sony’s Playstation 5

console and age rating. This was particularly interesting, as many users defended the win by saying that the game is for everyone, referring to all ages, all the while others argued that the game cannot be for everyone, as it can only be played on one platform, making its win seem unfair. As a game marketed towards all ages, Astro Bot already faces an uphill battle regarding its status as game of the year. This is strongly because gamers often have strong reactions to more casual games, where a lack of skill requirement and engaging story is seen as a negative. Furthermore, most users that discredit its win focus on Astro Bots predecessors, one of which was a free demo included with the Playstation 5 to showcase the features of its new controller. Those who disagree with its win use this notion to argue that Astro Bot is not a real game, or especially a full game. However, there is no readily apparent definition for what qualifies as a full game. This line of argumentation is most likely prevalent due to the inclusion of DLC, short for downloadable content, in the list of nominees. DLC is additional content for an already released game, such as an expansion or continuation to the story. The inclusion of DLC in the 2024 Game Awards was not revolutionary, as DLC has been nominated before. However, as the nominated DLC Elden Ring Shadow of the Erdtree was additional content for Elden Ring (From Software 2022), a game that had already won Game of the Year in 2022, many considered it to be cheating if it had won, as by definition it cannot be a full game. Another prevalent form of argumentation in the corpus is blaming the event itself, while citing numbers such as voting percentages and the number of games sold, correlating that more games sold should warrant for more presence in The Game Awards. Comparing sales figures is most often done by those arguing for another game, Black Myth Wukong (Game Science 2024) which is consequently the most frequent of the other nominees within the corpus.

Black Myth Wukong is a story-driven action roleplaying game, which is much more along the lines of previous Game of the Year winners and is seen as a much more serious and important game in the discourse. Analysing the context and collocations surrounding the keyword 'wukong' reveals that it is the main friction point of this particular discourse surrounding Astro Bot. Wukong frequently collocates with words such as 'robbed', 'elden', 'won/winning', 'deserved' and 'Chinese'. It is particularly interesting how the largely western userbase of reddit speaks of China in regard to gaming, in this case it is due to Black Myth Wukong being made by a Chinese studio. This is where the political undertones start to show in the discourse, as the nationality of the game is under fire, with users calling the game Chinese spyware, saying it is on the list of nominees only because it sold a large number of

copies in China and claiming that the Chinese government was involved. While researching the validity of these claims, I found an article by The Guardian where author Keza MacDonald claimed that:

Black Myth: Wukong became a kind of talisman for the video game culture wars. This was not helped when, a few weeks ago, advance copies of the game were sent out to streamers with guidelines prohibiting the discussion of Covid, the Chinese games industry and “feminist propaganda”, alongside more usual prohibitions against fetishisation and offensive language. (MacDonald 2024)

This helps explain why discourse surrounding this particular game is so often volatile in nature, as it is a prime example of an older school of thought of games and culture before the growth in diversity. Black Myth Wukong holds itself in the frame of a traditional, serious, core game for the traditionally male gamer. The game serves as stark contrast to Astro Bot, which fits more along the lines of the modern era of games as something for everyone to enjoy, even casuals.

## **4.2 The Concord corpus**

In the Concord corpus, I was expecting to find a similar theme of discourse as above, where users would argue on why and how a game is good and deserving of success. However, due to the context of the post being about a game that failed within weeks of release, it would likely serve as an important counterpoint to the corpus above, where users would instead deliberate on what makes a game bad and unsuccessful. The goal was to find how the discourse reflected these ideas, and what lied in the background. The 100 most frequent tokens are shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2. 100 most frequent tokens in the Concord corpus

Word	Freq	Word	Freq	Word	Freq	Word	Freq
game	3656	service	345	year	227	making	186
people	1256	devs	341	day	223	pronouns	180
games	1161	character	333	need	223	fun	179
one	725	way	324	sure	221	team	176
concord	701	shit	323	failure	220	put	173
play	645	shooter	321	pretty	218	released	171
think	604	want	320	market	217	hard	170
bad	586	release	316	say	216	less	166
years	573	hero	309	few	215	design	165
time	568	lol	304	launch	213	development	164
money	555	probably	302	gameplay	209	long	163
sony	504	new	298	look	209	thought	163
good	484	player	296	marketing	206	dev	159
free	446	overwatch	289	maybe	206	great	159
going	428	work	279	feel	205	weeks	158
players	423	least	277	mean	205	company	156
know	415	right	277	single	204	studio	156
well	374	gaming	265	industry	201	flop	154
characters	367	thing	264	days	198	hope	153
down	366	lot	252	million	194	world	153
actually	364	back	250	point	194	buy	151
see	359	first	250	played	193	things	151
p	358	better	244	big	192	paid	148
live	349	heard	238	playing	190	trying	147
f	347	yeah	231	literally	186	designs	143

Similarly to the Astro Bot corpus, mentions of other similar games such as Overwatch (Blizzard Entertainment 2016) are visible. However, there are far more mentions of actual game design elements such as characters, shooter, gameplay and design. Furthermore, tokens referring to the gaming industry by large are common with the likes of ‘Sony’, ‘devs’, ‘release’, ‘market/marketing’, ‘industry’ and ‘development’. The 100 most frequent tokens seem to paint a clear image of the discourse focusing on the developers, the players and the industry. In addition, the inclusion of the token pronouns in the list drew my attention as a standout from the previously established discourse themes. Because of this, the first keyword analysis would be of pronouns.

Analysing the collocations of pronouns revealed very little, other than the high likelihood it was followed by tokens like characters and people. The keyword analysis however, revealed that users were focused on pronouns as a part of character design in the game, which ties the discourse neatly to the previously established notion of culture wars and the shift in modern gaming. Context surrounding pronouns was about the inclusion of them within the character selection menu, with users arguing about its impact on the failure of the game. Pronouns were either seen as one of the reasons the game failed, with users labelling the character design as ‘ugly’, ‘woke’ and ‘bland’, alongside statements such as pronouns being the final nail in the coffin and that the game had more pronouns than players. By contrast, others defend the inclusion of pronouns, not for the progressivity of it, but by labelling it as inconsequential to the game’s failure due to the minute effect of it. The aforementioned culture war was clearly presented and mentioned in the discourse, with clearly hateful speech directed towards what users label as either woke, progressive or modern. Genuine discourse of why the game failed quickly turn into hate for the other.

Concord (Firewalk Studios 2024) is defined to be what is colloquially known as a hero shooter, where teams fight each other with characters that have their own unique visuals, abilities and equipment. The frequency of Overwatch as a keyword is explained by this, as it was largely seen as an immensely successful trendsetter for the genre. Discourse surrounding character design is clearly comparing the two games, with a focus on the characters of Concord being unlikeable for a multitude of reasons. Users define the characters of Concord to be overweight, odd and in general, ugly. Likeable characters are defined as a necessary part of a successful game. However, aside from the crude and hateful language, there was credibility to the character designs being lacklustre. In an article published by Medium, the character designs are critiqued in comparison to many other games, citing that the characters had odd colour palettes, a lack of purpose and a general weirdness to them (Blake, 2024).

Aside from the character design, discourse surrounding the game’s failure is often focused on the current state of the industry. Many users think that Concord was simply an unwanted entry in an extremely oversaturated genre, with many pre-established competitors. Additionally, the price point of Concord at \$39.99 was seen as a large contributor to its failure, as the previously mentioned largest competitor Overwatch is free to play. This argument reinforced by the frequency of tokens such as ‘money’, ‘free’, ‘f and p’. Antconc as a tool excludes numbers from tokens, which split the term ‘f2p’, meaning free to play into the two prevalent tokens. It is interesting to see how Concord’s failure is connected to the gaming industry as a

whole, with some users stating that this was a victory for the average gamer, showing that they do not want to buy modern games. Studying the contexts surrounding the token 'devs' revealed strong attitudes towards game developers from the viewpoint of a gamer, with some expressing sympathy towards the failure of their hard work, and others cracking jokes that the developers should be embarrassed, disgusted and toxic, even deserving of layoffs. It is surprising to see these attitudes clashing so heavily in the discourse, the general view of developers in the industry is that they are either just cogs in a machine doing as they are told or being the very reason the game failed.

## 5 Discussion

The results of the analysis seemed to paint a relatively clear picture of gaming discourse and its prevalent themes. Games and the industry in general are going through a time of change, which drives discourse into a more divisive and sometimes extreme form, with a majority of the narrative being polarized in the form of us versus them (van Dijk 2024). Those who seem to belong more into the category of old-school gamers usually deem them as being either modern gaming or those in the industry. Despite the growth created by new and expanding audiences, they are not given a welcoming embrace by a large number of those participating in discourse, instead seeing them as an unwelcome addition to what they often see as their own space. The inherent ideologies of those partaking in gaming discourse are common to show, usually as a form of attacking argumentation, once more leaning into the narrative of us versus them. It was interesting to see how both observable sides, those sides being with or against the essence of modern gaming, were more often than not quick to dismiss the other. Due to the vested interest of the average gamer partaking in gaming discourse being much higher than of those that simply play games in their free time, emotion and strong language is common. It is relatively safe to assume that most of the users are frequently reading gaming news and playing new games. Comparing these findings to those of Maloney, Roberts and Graham, it would seem that dialogue towards the more reactionary side has increased, as they noted that there was a lack of reactionary sentiments (2019, 64). As the studied material they used was taken from r/gaming posts from the years 2016 – 2017, their mention of how common inclusive comments were was interesting (Maloney, Roberts and Graham 2019, 64). It would seem that after eight years of the community growing, they have started to become more reactionary. This could be due to the overwhelming increase in culture wars online, with both observable sides having grown farther and farther apart leading to a more reactionary discourse.

Another important theme of the analysed discourse was how users defined successful and good games, leading to a point of discussion, what exactly makes a good game? In the corpora, a good game was mostly relative to the view of the one playing. The subjective nature of what makes one enjoy a game, compared to how users defended games was noteworthy. The very same features that made users like *Astro Bot*, for example, were reasons for others to hate it. Being a game anyone can play is a good thing, but others can label the game as too easy and casual, undeserving of serious appraisal in comparison to more

traditional, difficult and story-rich games. These findings were comparative to those of Maloney, Roberts and Graham, where games labelled generally as more casual were recommended for women (2019, 84). This notion of casual games being seen as something for women and children has stuck around through the years, which is especially interesting as these casual games are exactly the ones users recommend when trying to get others into the hobby in both my research and that of Maloney, Roberts and Graham (2019, 84).

Furthermore, casual gaming in general goes against the studied concept of geek masculinity on Reddit and gaming, where expertise and knowledge are valued (Massanari 2017, 332). The more established gamers can easily look down on a more casual game due to the lack of required knowledge or expertise to be good at it, which is in turn another way to feel superior in comparison to others and devalue their position in the community.

Despite all of the observable differences in personal views and opinions however, one unifying feature of discourse was a mutual distaste for those who make games. In both of the corpora analysed, the industry was often blamed for the failure of any given game, sometimes for understandable and well argumentized reasons, other times out of pure hate. The divisive nature of developers in the discourse surrounding Concord was intriguing, where on one side users felt bad for them, and others were glad they failed due to them being responsible for the games design choices. Especially for those who see modern gaming as the enemy, a game with features that they deem to be progressive failing by such a large extent is a victory for them. They may view it as direct proof of them being right in their opinions. Throughout my research, evidence of a visible change in the industry and its consumers became clear, change was internalized by many of those partaking in gaming discourse. Reactions to the change and their own place in the hobby changing to such an extent highlighted the underlying reasons to either embrace it or deny it. However, it is important to note that the discourse analysed is inherently more volatile as it is taking place online, in relative anonymity, within a virtual space that requires one to be a registered user, leading to more emotional involvement and hateful speech. Seeing the gaming industry through the lens of these corpora was conflicting, as it seemed like failure was applauded more than success.

## 6 Conclusion

To conclude my research, the gaming industry and the umbrella of consumers it has gathered through its rampant era of growth has caused an unfortunate divide in an otherwise welcoming hobby. Gamers are quick to judge others and especially those who make the very products they consume, sometimes for good reasons and other times not. It was disheartening to see how discourse surrounding a celebration of video games as a form of art and culture was clouded by culture wars. The greatest strengths of games such as escapism from the struggles of everyday life and large communities of passionate people are under threat, the same politics one would want to escape from find their way into games and the people playing. This subject has strong potential for future research in my opinion, due to the expandable nature of corpus-based linguistics. Before starting my analysis section, I had originally intended to use upwards of ten corpora, however the sheer amount of discourse that can be analysed in even just one led me to cut down my sample size to just two. Furthermore, my analysis of the corpora was quite surface level, studying keywords in context while knowing what I will likely find. For future research it would be beneficial to collect even more data from a corpus with collocations alone. The limitations of both computing power and writing space could easily be conquered with more time and resources.

Discourse analysis inherently lends itself to focusing on the negatives, placing the researcher in a place where they seek to prove how minorities of any sort are treated and talked about by the majority, mostly seeking to find evidence of oppression and control. While this is of utmost importance, I could not have pulled through with this research if it was all negative. For the hundreds of hateful comments could easily be outweighed with just one positive opinion, such as a parent expressing how grateful they were to enjoy a game with their children or someone making the fondest of memories with their friends, even if the game was a monumental failure. All in all, gaming will continue to grow despite all the negatives, hopefully within the realm of academia as well, if for no other reason than it being too big of a business to ignore.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Modified version of the PubMed Stopword list

a	before	everyone	inc	nearly
about	beforehand	everything	incl	necessarily
above	being	everywhere	indeed	neither
abs	below	except	into	never
accordingly	beside	find	investigate	nevertheless
across	besides	for	is	next
after	between	found	it	no
afterwards	beyond	from	its	nobody
again	both	further	itself	noone
against	but	gave	just	nor
all	by	get	keep	normally
almost	came	give	kept	nos
alone	can	go	kg	not
along	cannot	gone	km	noted
already	cc	got	last	nothing
also	cm	gov	latter	now
although	come	had	latterly	nowhere
always	compare	has	lb	obtained
am	could	have	ld	of
among	de	having	letter	off
amongst	dealing	he	like	often
an	department	hence	ltd	on
analyze	depend	her	made	only
and	did	here	mainly	onto
another	discover	hereafter	make	or
any	dl	hereby	many	other
anyhow	do	herein	may	others
anyone	does	hereupon	me	otherwise
anything	done	hers	meanwhile	ought
anywhere	due	herself	mg	our
applicable	during	him	might	ours
apply	each	himself	ml	ourselves
are	ec	his	mm	out
arise	ed	how	mo	over
around	effected	however	more	overall
as	eg	hr	moreover	owing
assume	either	i	most	own
at	else	ie	mostly	oz
be	elsewhere	if	mr	particularly
became	enough	ii	much	per
because	especially	iii	mug	perhaps
become	et	immediately	must	pm
becomes	etc	importance	my	precede
becoming	ever	important	myself	predominant
been	every	in	namely	ly

present	so	therein	via	your
presently	some	thereupon	was	yours
previously	somehow	these	we	yourself
primarily	someone	they	were	yourselves
promptly	something	this	what	yr
pt	sometime	thorough	whatever	s
quickly	sometimes	those	when	t
quite	somewhat	though	whence	even
rather	somewhere	through	whenever	m
readily	soon	throughout	where	re
really	specifically	thru	whereafter	ve
recently	still	thus	whereas	d
refs	strongly	to	whereby	im
regarding	studied	together	wherein	didn't
relate	sub	too	whereupon	isn
said	substantially	toward	wherever	wasn
same	such	towards	whether	cant
seem	sufficiently	try	which	don
seemed	take	type	while	dont
seeming	tell	ug	whither	doesn
seems	th	under	who	didn
seen	than	unless	whoever	thats
seriously	that	until	whom	ive
several	the	up	whose	Type
shall	their	upon	why	ll
she	theirs	us	will	isnt
should	them	use	with	shouldn
show	themselves	used	within	havent
showed	then	usefully	without	wouldn
shown	thence	usefulness	wk	aren
shows	there	using	would	wasnt
significantly	thereafter	usually	wt	
since	thereby	various	yet	
slightly	therefore	very	you	