

# **Ethos, Logos and Pathos in the Persuasion of the Sides of the Civil War in the Game Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim**

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Master's Thesis

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This thesis deals with persuasion in video games, specifically in Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim, from a linguistic perspective. The aim of the study was to look at how persuasion manifests itself in some of the scenes of dialogue in Skyrim, how it relates to the Aristotelian modes of persuasion, and how player agency affects the persuasion that the player is subjected to. The method of analysis used in this study is a method utilizing close reading, adapted to a video game study. The adaptation of the methodology is based on the previous work of Higgins and Walker. The results show that the dialogue in Skyrim utilizes all persuasive techniques analyzed in this study. The language of persuasion experienced by the player affects their view on the character based on the Aristotelian modes of persuasion. The researcher suggests that since persuasion is clearly present in video games, they need to be researched further to understand the effectiveness of persuasion that happens in fictional settings. The researcher also suggests further changes to the methodology of the study and proposes that it would be beneficial to include surveys on persuasiveness of the characters for players of video games.

**Key words:** persuasion, ethos, logos, pathos, game studies, persuasive technique, mode of persuasion

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## 1 Introduction

On November 11<sup>th</sup> in 2011, Bethesda Game Studios released *Skyrim*, the fifth installment of its acclaimed *Elder Scrolls* series of games. *Skyrim* is a game where the player takes on the role of the mythical Dragonborn, who is destined to defeat Alduin the World-Eater during a time when a civil war rages across the Imperial province of *Skyrim*. Since its release, many players have discussed the merits of siding with either of the two factions warring in the civil war of the story, the Stormcloaks and the Imperials. Characters in both of these factions attempt to persuade the player of their cause, and as it is interesting to study the kind of language used in this persuasion. Games are a rising form of media, and Mäyrä (2008, 6) states that their success has led gaming to become a part of everyday life for many people. This statement reflects the importance of research into games. If gaming is a big part of everyday life for many people, it is important to understand the potential they have as a persuasive medium, because it has an effect on the perspectives of ever wider audiences.

While game studies is an interdisciplinary field, this study focuses on linguistics. Hal-mari and Virtanen (2005, 4) state that persuasion is an integral part of human communication and that there is always meaning to be found in researching it. I agree and as such it is one of my motivations for this specific study. My other motivation for studying this game stems from my personal interest in the game. *Skyrim* has been one of my favorite games since its release, and the civil war in the game has been a central focal point of discussion for the game in various forums. I too find the discussion on the civil war fascinating, and as such I believe analyzing the language used in the game will provide interesting results. I am also interested in investigating how player agency affects the persuasion that the player is subjected to. Player agency means the availability of choice given to the player during play. Modern technology has facilitated the creation of larger games, and as such writers are able to tackle more and more nuanced ideas in their games, which has also helped to cause interest for studying language use in games. Mäyrä (2008, 118-119) also argues that the need for phones and personal computers have increased commercial success for video games. I argue that commercial success leads to further importance in studying a phenomenon.

The persuasion that I examine in this study is based on the Aristotelian *modes* of persuasion: *ethos*, *logos*, and *pathos*. The modes of persuasion are about the perception of the personal character of the speaker, their apparent rationality, and the potential for understanding human emotion (Aristotle 2012, 4). I want to investigate how language reinforces these modes

of persuasion in characters of the game. Here I present my research questions for this paper. I also hypothesize their possible answers.

1: How do the Aristotelian ethos, logos and pathos appear in the language that the characters use to persuade the player?

2: How does player agency affect the persuasion that the player is subjected to, and how does it change the persuasiveness or character of the chosen or the opposing faction?

For the first research question, I hypothesize that all Aristotelian modes of persuasion are present in linguistic persuasion, and they are used consistently in the dialogue of the game to a varying effect. Their presence might also be different, depending on the character of the speaker, so some characters might mainly utilize persuasive techniques that increase the ethos of the persuader, while others may utilize persuasive techniques in the mode of logos. I hypothesize this because game writers may portray differences based on the character, or the writers may be different for different characters. For the second question, I hypothesize that the player agency will further persuade the player of the good ethos, pathos, and logos of the respective persuading party, but also show a different kind of persuasion in nature for the opposing side.

The following subsection 1.1 discusses the background lore for the Civil War of Skyrim in more detail, and it is recommended that the reader who is not familiar with the game's story reads the subsection to understand some of the background lore that may be omitted or is not obvious during the analysis itself. Persuasion is the overarching topic for section 2. In section 2.1 I discuss persuasion in linguistics, while in subsection 2.2 I discuss ethos, pathos, and logos. I discuss game studies in subsection 2.3 and this discussion also includes persuasion from a more interdisciplinary viewpoint. Section 3 includes the discussion on material and methods of study. Methods utilized in game studies can vary greatly, and according to Mäyrä (2008, 156) the researchers themselves need to often construct their own methodologies in game studies to suit their research goals. This is reflected in the methodology of this study too, and I reason my choices in the adaptation of the methodology for my own study in section 3.2. Analysis is conducted in section 4. The discussion and conclusion are discussed together in section 5.

### **1.1 Story Background for Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim**

This subsection is for those unfamiliar with the setting of the civil war in Skyrim, and the whole background of the story of the game. This is done so that the people reading this thesis will

have a better understanding of the story and possible argumentation that follows specific statements that the characters may give to the player. This recounting of the story is according to my interpretation of the story of the game. I attempt to be as neutral as possible in its presentation, while retaining many of the necessary elements that set up the story for the player during the game. Most of this knowledge is revealed to the player as the story progresses, and some players might not get this picture of the story, and some might get an even more detailed view of the story, depending on how much they engage with the characters of the game and the lore books inside the game. There can also be a difference in how much players engage with outside game sources, like the previous Elder Scrolls games or with other players or the developers on social media and various forums. Readers who want to study the story of Skyrim further should either play the game themselves (cf. Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim Special Edition, 2016) or study the various wikis on the topic of Elder Scrolls (cf. UESPwiki, The Elder Scrolls Wiki).

The story of the game is set in the province of *Skyrim*, where a civil war has started. The reason for the civil war is the discontent some of the citizens of Skyrim have towards the Empire that rules over Skyrim during the start of the game, and these differences have ultimately led to fighting between the Empire and the discontent *Nords*, the generally believed to be native people of Skyrim. The rebels are led by *Ulfric Stormcloak*, whom the rebels are also named after. Ulfric fought on the side of the Empire during what is called *the Great War* which happened 30 years before the beginning of the game. During that great war, the Empire was almost destroyed by its antagonizing faction, *the Aldmeri Dominion*, led by the High Elves of Summerset Isle. The Aldmeri Dominion fought its way to *the Imperial City*, the capital of the Empire, but was unable to take the city. A peace treaty was made between the two warring empires, called *the White-Gold concordat*, and a part of this treaty was the cause of much resentment for some of the Nords of Skyrim. One of the clauses in the treaty outlawed the worship of *Talos*, one of the nine gods in *the Imperial Pantheon* of gods. Talos is believed to have been a mortal Nord in his life by many and is also believed to have ascended to godhood after his great deeds in mortal life. The Aldmeri Dominion's power over the Empire is held by the common belief that the Empire could not hold its own in another war, so the Empire must concede in upholding the peace treaty, and the outlawing of the worship of Talos.

The outlawing of one of the most important gods for the Nords ended up causing a lot of resentment, and as such some of the Nords of Skyrim tried to find other ways to keep worshipping Talos. Some preferred worshipping in secret, others fought for the possibility of worshipping Talos publicly. In the aftermath of the Great War, one of the cities of Skyrim, *Markarth*, was taken in a native uprising. To regain the possibility of free worship of Talos,

Ulfric led his newly formed militia, the Stormcloaks, to take back the city after having been promised the free worship of Talos by the Jarl of Markarth. Ulfric managed to regain the control of the city for the Empire, but the Aldmeri Dominion found out about the promise of free worship and called for the imprisonment of Ulfric.

The Empire handed Ulfric over to the Aldmeri Dominion in hopes of appeasing them. During Ulfric's imprisonment, things moved on in his native land. His father passed away during his imprisonment, and when he later returned, he returned as a Jarl, succeeding his father. Ulfric began to work for the independence of Skyrim, attempting to first convince the current High King, *Torygg*, of the need for independence, to which Torygg was quite receptive towards, having heard of Ulfric's deeds during the Great War. Ulfric could not wait for Torygg to accept the concept of independence, however, and ended up challenging Torygg into a duel to death. The young High King could not match Ulfric in a fight and ended up losing his life. This sparked the civil war between the Nords: There are those who support the Empire and those who fight for independence with Ulfric. The game's story begins with the capture of Ulfric by the leader of the war effort on the Empire's side, General Tullius, who is now taking the rebel leader to be executed in the hamlet of Helgen.

## 2 Persuasion

The following subsections deal with persuasion from different perspectives, although, they are still linked through the shared interest in persuasion. I also relate these perspectives to the goals of my study in the following subsections. Subsection 2.1 deals with persuasion in linguistics, with a goal to situate persuasion as a phenomenon that has bearing in the field. Ethos, pathos, and logos are discussed in subsection 2.2; these are the classic Aristotelian modes of persuasion, which are important for the main methodology of the study. Section 2.3 then introduces the genre of game studies, persuasion in game studies, and ultimately examines some studies done on persuasion in game studies.

### 2.1 Persuasion and Linguistics

There are some questions that are important to clarify on persuasion and rhetoric and their connection to linguistics. How is persuasion defined in linguistics? How does persuasion appear in the language of the persuader? Where does persuasion fit in the linguistic sphere? How is persuasion different in various speech situations or genres? This subsection seeks to answer these questions before moving on to the background of the Aristotelian ethos, pathos, and logos.

A core definition of persuasion is its goal of changing someone's thinking or reinforcing already existent beliefs (Virtanen and Halmari, 2005, 3). Lakoff (2001, 199-200) mentions that some linguists do not consider persuasion as a linguistic phenomenon because they do not consider "anything we do with words" (ibid.) as something to study in linguistics, while others accept that this is something that is part of the study of linguistics. I argue that it is important that linguists also consider what language is used for, because language use is goal-oriented, and we want to achieve things with language, so the forms that language takes are also important to analyze, to understand discourse related phenomena like persuasion. The definition of persuasion in the context of this study is language use that attempts to change or reinforce existent beliefs that the audience might have depending on the persuader's disposition.

For Östman all interaction is persuasive, and the way we should approach persuasion from a linguistic point of view is on a continuum of interactions from propaganda to phatic communication (2005, 191-192). Phatic communication means everyday communication that seemingly has no persuasive weight, like talking about weather or asking how someone is. In that continuum, persuasion sits in the middle, between manipulation and everyday interaction. I argue persuasion can happen in different forms in these forms of interaction. Its nature might be slightly different in a situation where phatic communion happens compared to a situation

where propaganda happens e.g., less coercive in nature in everyday interactions compared to situations where manipulation is the primary goal of the interaction. Östman (ibid.) does clarify that a person's possible reading of the situation might change how they view a specific interaction so that an interaction involving propaganda might not be necessarily interpreted as such. I argue that these possible readings include the readings of the character of the speaker, and the persuasiveness of the character of the speaker is possible to be analyzed in their language in various forms of interaction, from phatic communication to propaganda. Östman (2005, 203-208) looked at possible implicit collocates for the following words: *Propaganda*, *manipulation* and *persuasion* and concluded that persuasion as a concept is best looked at through the lens of discourse analysis, with the possible aid of a corpus study. A corpus study would be a difficult thing to conduct on a video game where there is no existent corpus, but collocates are an essential part of language study, and the discussion on pathos in section 2.2 further argues for the importance of collocates in this study matter.

Schiffrin, Tannen and Hamilton (2001, 1-2) showcase the myriad definitions that compose what discourse is by categorizing it into three categories “(1) anything beyond the sentence, (2) language use, and (3) a broader range of social practice that includes nonlinguistic and nonspecific instances of language” (ibid.). These are then things that can be analyzed in discourse analysis. So where does persuasion sit in these categories? I argue that it is present in all of them. Many speech situations, such as negotiations or ceremonies, are either longer than a single sentence or include interpretations that go beyond what is being said in one sentence. The importance of the second category is probably intuitive since language is often used as the primary means of persuasion. The relevancy of the third category of Schiffrin, Tannen and Hamilton's deals with situational language use in specific contexts, like persuasion through social means. Persuasion, with manipulation, is also inherently tied to critical discourse analysis, through its use of discourse as a means of changing someone's mind to exert power in influencing their actions (van Dijk, 2001, 355). This is also why persuasion goes beyond the sentence: it is purposeful use of language to change someone's mind or reinforce already existent beliefs that the persuader considers desirable.

The final question that I set for this subsection was the importance of genre or the speech situation that the persuasion occurs in. Of course, the genre for this specific study relates to games, as the audience of the persuasion is the player and the player character. Communication has different audiences, depending on the communicative medium that is being employed (Virtanen and Halmari 2005, 6). Virtanen and Halmari (2005, 8) also argue that the genres of those

mediums reflect the communicative practices that their primary audience is expected to be familiar with, and secondary audiences that might not be familiar with the genre but encounter the persuasive situation through other means. The speech situation is then expected to be tailored to a specific, perceived audience. The audience for the game, of course, is its players. The audience of people playing *Skyrim* is quite varied, since the game has been translated into many languages, and the players of the game are from varying nationalities, so the effectiveness of the persuasion can be affected by the language in which the player plays the game and their cultural background. This study focuses on the original English version of *Skyrim*. Genres can have varying effects on persuasiveness, depending on if the texts in the genre are more explicit in their persuasiveness or more implicit (Virtanen and Halmari 2005, 230). Both explicit and implicit persuasion appear in the material of this study, and the methodology I employed also considers implicit persuasiveness. Bronwen in their book (2015, 170) also argued that fictional dialogue in novels shows power differences, and that linguistic tools of analysis work for the analysis of fictional dialogue, which is important since context of this study is fictional dialogue in a video game.

Some aspects of persuasion that are discussed in linguistics are multimodality and coercion. To Miller (2013, 72) persuasiveness is inherently linked to language use, and anything nonverbal involving a speech situation is related in persuasiveness to the kind of language being used. This definition clarifies why multimodality is important to investigate in a persuasiveness related study, because it shows that communication is not just verbal, but also nonverbal. Multimodality's importance then grows in mediums where there are other modes to be perceived than just written language, like games and movies. Unfortunately, while I would prefer to include a multimodal aspect to this study, the length and scope of the study restrict my ability to include it.

One aspect of persuasion is coercion. According to Miller (2013, 71) coercion generally takes on the form of nonverbal threats like weaponry or economic turmoil. Since the context of the research for this study is a story of a game it is very unlikely that there is anything directly coercive towards the player in its content. However, immersion and roleplaying can play a part in the player feeling a certain way about how their character is coerced, so a potential study could look more closely at coercion if the scope of the study allows it, and if the methodology of that study considers coercive language.

## 2.2 Ethos, Logos and Pathos

Aristotle is one of the classical philosophers of the Athenian school of philosophers, following his teacher Plato. Aristotle's book *Rhetoric* includes his view on the three modes of persuasion, often commonly referred to in academia as ethos, pathos, and logos. This subsection defines the modes of persuasion, and links them to my study goal. This subsection also introduces some of the research of Higgins and Walker and the persuasive techniques. The methodology of Higgins and Walker is also the basis of my methodology. I discuss the methodology in further detail in section 3.2.

Ethos is defined by Aristotle as “the personal character of the speaker” (Aristotle 2012, 4). Persuasion that relates to ethos is affected by the credibility of that speaker's character (Ibid.) Ethos then manifests in the material as the possible interpretations of the credibility of the characters inside the game. Notice, however, that the analysis of ethos does not focus on the credibility of the writers of the game. Writers are in a way hidden in gameplay, and often the credits are only shown after the player finishes the game. In *Skyrim* the player who wants to view the credits must specifically click the option to view them, as the credits are never shown in actual gameplay, as opposed to most games where credits are played once the player finishes the game. According to the model of Higgins and Walker (2012, 198), Ethos is instantiated by persuasive techniques that take advantage of *similitude*, *ingratiation*, *deference*, *expertise*, *self-criticism*, *inclination to succeed and consistency*. I discuss some of these persuasive techniques through the lens of my study and provide examples in the material and methodology section as well as the reasonings on the changes to the methodology.

Pathos in the writing of Aristotle refers to “putting the audience in a certain state of mind” (Aristotle 2012, 4). In a more general sense, it means the emotional appeal to the audience (Virtanen and Halmari 2005, 5). While emotional appeals are generally thought to be poor argumentation in philosophy, they can certainly have a persuasive effect. In Higgins' and Walker's model, pathos includes language use such as *metaphors* and *identification*, especially through cultural means (Higgins and Walker 2012, 198). In the context of *Skyrim* this could for example instantiate itself in how the characters refer to a player character depending on their background, for example whether the player character is a Nord or not, whether those in-game cultural references, like the references to the god *Talos*, have persuasive strength in their linguistic context. According to Halmari and Virtanen (2005, 5-6) pathos is covert, and it can be found in the connotational analysis for certain discourse types, such as media and advertising, which could make the emotional appeals harder to identify. Connotational analysis is also made

easier with the analysis of collocates, so the methodology of this study includes the analysis of collocates with identification.

Finally, *logos* refers to the “proof, or apparent proof, provided by the words of the speech itself” (Aristotle 2012, 4). In everyday language, it means how rational the content of the argument itself is, or how rational it seems at the very least. For *logos*, Higgins and Walker (2012, 198) set out the following persuasive techniques: *argumentation, logic, warrants/justification, claims, data, evidence/examples*. Higgins and Walker (ibid.) elucidate the definition of *logos* further, by pointing out that it is not just rationality that is persuasive, but *apparent rationality*, which is also mentioned in the quote by Aristotle in the beginning of this paragraph. This is especially relevant to think about, since not all players have full knowledge of the story of the game, and as such they might find arguments that have no basis inside the game world strong, because it corresponds to their beliefs of storytelling or other possible beliefs on relevant status quos, e.g., rebels are generally good in stories, or they might relate their own thoughts on faith with the religious struggle of the Nords.

To Aristotle (2012, 4) a good persuader is “able (1) to reason logically, (2) to understand human character and goodness in their various forms, and (3) to understand the emotions - that is, to name them and describe them, to know their cause and the way in which they are excited.” (ibid.) To all of these I believe my model which is based on the model of Higgins and Walker, can answer. Before going into the full detail of the methodology and the persuasive techniques, however, it is time to look at game studies and persuasion.

### 2.3 Game Studies and Persuasion

As the target of this study is a game, it is important to show how persuasion is dealt with in game studies and how game studies relate to the field of linguistics. Game studies is a multi-disciplinary field, where the focus of the research is on three factors: Study of games, their players, and their contexts (Mäyrä, 2008, 2). Context and the study of *Skyrim* are the primary interests for this study, and while players are not explicitly studied, I still analyze the potential effects language can have on different players. Since I look at persuasion, it is clear from the previous discussion on persuasion that audience plays a big role in how persuasive something is. Mäyrä (2008, 2) also proposes that the contextual frames of how players and games intersect are affected by genres, cultures, and to what extent it is in a public or private space, and how those factors influence playing practices i.e., how players play games when they are in private or public spaces. So contextually games can have a lot of variation depending on various factors regarding the game itself and the culture surrounding the game.

Texts can also be blends of multiple different genres, depending on their content (Virtanen and Halmari 2005, 10). From the point of view of genre, Skyrim is an action-roleplaying game, it is also an open-world game, and as such it has quite a bit of freedom in how the player approaches the game. This means that the players of the game, the audience, are very varied in their knowledge of in-game realities. Skyrim is a single player game, and as such players who want to talk about the game must do so outside the game itself, in various forums or on social media. Skyrim is a fantasy game, and as such cultures that are present in the game world itself are purely fictional, with clear inspiration taken from real-life cultures. For example, Nords in Elder Scrolls series can be thought of as being heavily inspired by Old Norse cultures, Imperials by Roman culture etc. All these factors create the blend of genres that influence Skyrim.

Skyrim's player base consists of people from various nationalities, genders, and linguistic backgrounds. From the point of view of persuasion, this variety of the audience of persuasion, the players, can have a varying effect on the efficiency of the persuasion presented in the game. For example, the players can have varying knowledge on the cultures of the game world, and as such might not be persuaded by modes of persuasion that could persuade others. Also, the player's own culture could be significant in the effect of the persuasion, however analyzing that is outside the scope of this study, however I do speculate in my analysis when I think a method of persuasion is effective depending on how a possible background of the player could influence their view on the effectiveness of the persuasion.

The work of Bogost in social sciences has been a great influence for persuasion in video games. While Bogost's book *persuasive games* is mostly related to the field of social science and especially political science, it nevertheless has relevant ideas for a study in linguistics. Bogost (2007, 3) mentions that video games have a unique way of persuasion as a medium compared to other media, because of something he calls *procedural rhetoric*, a way of creating persuasion through creating, explaining, and then understanding a particular process. As this study focuses on linguistics, understanding the language in the story as a process is important to understanding the structuring of the story of the civil war in Skyrim from a more holistic viewpoint. The writers, I expect, intended the language to reflect certain attitudes in the characters of the story, and as such the Aristotelian modes of persuasion should be a relevant way to understand the process of creating persuasive language in video games, and its possible effects on the players. Bogost's work does, however, deal mostly with games from their unique characteristics like visuality and how the player is steered to play certain games, thus affecting persuasion through means of play.

As a multidisciplinary field, game studies have been performed in various disciplines. Mäyrä (2008, 11) lists various fields and mentions that it has been proposed that game studies should be its own discipline, *ludology*. As one might expect, game studies have been conducted mostly in the field of social sciences. For example, Abraham (2018) studied the effects of visual presentation and its effects on the ideology of climate change. He also suggested that researchers should ask for opinions from the audience on how these representations affected the persuasiveness of the ideology (Abraham 2018). Robinson (2012) researched the effects on militarization from the perspective of video games as a persuasive form of media. Robinson's study suggested that video games have "vital potential to embed real social critique in players' experiences of their virtual world" (Robinson 2012, 519). From a more linguistic viewpoint of persuasion, Punormo and Khristianto (2019) proposed a five-step procedure that reveals cues for the narrative and game completion, and how these cues then also reveal ideologies and affects how player responds to things in games. They (ibid.) proposed that this form of analysis that they call ludic linguistics could work "as a bridge between language studies and game studies" (Punormo and Khristianto 2019, 236). Unfortunately looking at the mechanics of the game, such as tutorials, and how they persuade the player is somewhat out of scope for this study, since the interest in this study is focused on the content of the language used by the characters.

### **3 Material and Methods**

This section includes the introduction to the material used, and the methodology employed in this study. First, I go through the material, going through how it was collected and how I chose the material for this study. Methodology follows the material section, and that is where I discuss the precise nature of my methodology.

#### **3.1 Material**

The material of this study consists of videos taken of dialogue in Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim. The dialogues chosen for the material were chosen depending on my, the author's, perception on where it is most likely that a possible player of the game would be subjected to persuasion, and the likelihood of the player experiencing that dialogue. The dialogue chosen from the main questline, the quests that concern the main story of Skyrim, consists of the opening sequence and a temporary truce negotiation between the two warring factions. As might be intuitive, the civil war questline is also included in the language that I analyze, since the civil war itself is the main theme going on in that questline. The scenes chosen for the analysis from the civil war questline consist of joining the two respective factions and the final moments of the civil war, where the player has chosen to side with either of the factions.

The number of scenes studied in this thesis is 6. These scenes consist of dialogue that is either (1) directed towards the player, where the player has no input of their own, (2) dialogue that the player is directly involved in, and has the option of choosing different dialog options, and (3) dialogue that the player character might hear, but is not directed at them, for example two characters speaking amongst themselves, instead of directing any of the things they say at the player character. The exact scenes analyzed are further discussed in their respective subsections in section 4 with reasoning as to why I chose the specific scenes. I recorded the material in video form for this study from my own gameplay. The recording of the material is approximately 75 minutes in length, spread across different videos depending on the scene. Saving and reloading the game was necessary to further explore dialogue options in scenes. Players can also reload and choose different options if they prefer, so a potential player can also get the full context of the material. Where examples are given for some of the dialogue in the analysis section, it is taken from the original subtitles provided by the game itself, as they are available for all scenes relevant for this study. As such, all examples may have some ungrammatical language, consistency related problems and punctuation errors. The copyright of the game and

its dialogue is owned by its developer Bethesda Game Studios and its publisher Bethesda Softworks as well as their parent company ZeniMax Media inc. The material shown in examples is used for the purpose of scientific study and not commercial gain.

### 3.2 Methodology

Ethos, pathos, and logos are central to the methodology of this study. In this section I discuss the specific application of my methodology to reveal these persuasive techniques in the language of the characters of the game. My methodology is based on the earlier work of Higgins and Walker (2012). The goal for my approach to this method was to (1) Make it fit a game study, where the original methodology was applied to study the language of businesses in societal and environmental reports. (2) Fit the specific frame of Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim, and (3) To allow for the persuasive sides to persuade against joining their opposing faction. The next paragraphs discuss the persuasive techniques in the categories of ethos, pathos, and logos respectively. Subsection 3.2 ends with Table 1, which illustrates some language use that reveals persuasive techniques that may appear in one's language.

The nature of ethos was briefly discussed in section 2.2, with the rest of the Aristotelian modes of persuasion. I also showcased Higgins' and Walker's model's terminology for how the mode of ethos might appear in language. I adopted Higgins' and Walker' term *persuasive technique* for this study. The persuasive techniques concerning the mode of ethos are *similitude*, *ingratiation*, *deference*, *expertise*, *self-criticism*, *inclination to succeed*, and *consistency* (Higgins and Walker 2012, 198-199). Higgins and Walker define similitude as the appeal to similarities between the speaker and the audience (ibid.). Their examples of language that uses similitude includes usage of pronouns. Compare for example usage of *I* and *us* in a persuasive situation. As an opposite to similitude, I decided that it would be preferable to look at persuasion that uses othering of the opposing side. The reasoning for including othering stems from the fact that the factions in the game also try to appeal to the worse ethos of their opposing faction, thus I feel it necessary to include this element in the analysis. Othering would then manifest itself with pronouns like *them*, and *those*. Similitude and othering also appear sometimes together with *identification*, a persuasive technique concerning pathos, in phrases such as *those rebels*, for example. *Ingratiation* is sometimes used in lieu of similitude, with its goal being to establish communality and harmony inside a specific group (Higgins and Walker, 2012, 199). I, however, do not use ingratiation in this study but rather similitude with othering as its opposite, since they concern similar things, such as communality and harmony, or in the case of othering disharmony or unbelonging.

*Deference* refers to the “respect for the rights and feelings of the audience” (Higgins and Walker, 2012, 199). The examples that Higgins and Walker (ibid.) give are the following: “‘with your permission’, ‘in my opinion’, ‘join me if you would’”. Deference in this study shows in the agency given to the player, such as the possibility of taking part in dialogue, or that their choices are respected. *Expertise* refers to the apparent qualifications of the speaker (ibid.). In *Skyrim*, this could mean that the speaker has or is claimed to have knowledge of history through their own experience, for example participation in the Great War prior to the beginning of the game’s story. Language use that refers to this kind of assertion is what I study when I analyze expertise. *Self-criticism* is argued by Walker and Higgins to show honesty (ibid.) and as such this is also something to look at when it comes to ethos. Also, one should remember that speakers represent their groups, so self-criticism can include criticism of the speaker’s respective faction. *Inclination to succeed* refers to the past successes of the persuader, and when these are referred to, the audience is thought to trust the character of the speaker further (ibid.). Expertise and inclination to succeed differ in that expertise refers to the possessed qualities of the speaker like their qualifications or experience, while inclination to succeed refers to the past successes that the persuader claims to have. Consistency is not analyzed in this study, as not all the things that the characters say in their persuasion can be included in the scope of the study, and as such it would provide an inadequate picture of their possibly consistent usage of language.

For pathos, the methodology of this study includes identification and metaphors. Identification is somewhat difficult to analyze in a fictional work since it may happen through the experience of the player character or through the player itself. Higgins and Walker (2012, 199) give an example to cultural identification through shared heritage like being a new Zealander. In the case of the game this would refer to in-game identities, such as Nords, Imperials, believers of Talos and so on. Where there are references to these cultural things, they can then be thought of as appealing to the audience’s emotions. Other forms of identification are also used in this study, such as prominent people such as *Ulfric* and potential allegiances to them, descriptive identifications like *traitor*, and occupational identifications such as *soldier*. As mentioned earlier, identification can co-occur with similitude and othering, providing a solid starting point for connotational analysis of pathos.

Metaphors then could be like Nords often calling people *milk-drinkers* when they do not perceive their actions to be honorable. Where there is language use like this, I analyze their context and ponder how they might affect the emotions of the audience toward the persuader.

Metaphors, as a persuasive technique of the mode of pathos also have importance in the connotational analysis, and as such when metaphors appear in dialogue, I analyze their potential connotation and how that can affect the perception of the persuader's pathos.

Finally for logos I look at the persuasive techniques that Higgins and Walker apply for logos. These are *argumentation, logic, warrants/justifications, claims, data, and evidence*. Evidence and data are hard to look at in a fictional work where there is no certainty of whether something is a fact or not, and as such I decided to exclude them from my methodology. Also, the in-game lore of Elder Scrolls series is often quite muddled, and as such it is somewhat hard to tell what in-game lore is true in game and what is not. *Argumentation and logic* I combine into their own language use. This can appear in structures like: *Because x then y*. I also make no speculation on the truth of the statements because logos also includes apparent rationality, and as such the truth value of an argument does not matter in this context only the form. *Claims* I look at as truth statements that have no "because x then y" structure, but rather when the persuader just claims something as a fact. For Higgins and Walker *justification* means rational behind taken actions (Higgins and Walker 2012, 198). The analysis of justification includes the persuader attempts to *justify* their or their faction's actions in some manner.

A word, phrase or sentence can utilize multiple modes and persuasive techniques, and it is reflected in the analysis. The methodology I employed in the analysis of the material included close reading of the material, with the intention of finding persuasive techniques. Table 1 includes my examples of the persuasive techniques in a prototypical context and in the context of Skyrim.

**Table 1.** Modes of Persuasion with persuasive techniques and potential examples

Mode	Persuasive Technique	Prototypical example	Example from the game
Ethos	Similitude/othering	“We” / “Them”	“Us Legionnaires” / “Those traitors”
	Deference	“I trust your judgement in this”	“It is your choice”
	Expertise	“She knows a lot about the matter”	“Ulfric fought in the great war”
	Self-criticism	“I admit I do not know this”	“A torture room, gods I wish we didn’t need these”
	Inclination to succeed	“He has been extremely successful in the past”	“He has been in Skyrim for a few months now and he has really turned things around for the Empire”
Pathos	Metaphors	“Black sheep”, “Sharpest tool in the shed”	“Milk-drinkers” “cornered rats”
	Identification	Nationalities (British etc.), Cultural identification (Catholic etc.) Occupational (student etc.)	“Nords” “Imperials”, “Skyrim”, “Prisoner”
Logos	Argumentation/logic	“Because I drank coffee, I do not feel tired”	“If he hadn’t signed that peace deal, the Thalmor would have destroyed the Empire”
	Justifications	“I need to do this “	“I don’t want some elf telling me what gods I can and cannot worship”
	Claims	“Earth revolves around the Sun”	“The Legion is Skyrim’s only hope for real peace right now”

## 4 Analysis

Subsections 4.1 and 4.2 deal with the main questline of the game and the civil war questline, where subsection 4.1 is focused on the content available early in the game, and 4.2 later in the game. The main questline of the game mostly deals with the return of the dragons, and the player character fulfilling their destiny as the Dragonborn, someone who is prophesized to defeat the dragons by claiming their souls. Nevertheless, the main questline still has themes relating to the civil war, especially in the two scenes analyzed for this study, and it is the questline a potential player of Skyrim is most likely to engage with. The civil war questline deals with ending the civil war between the Imperials and the Stormcloaks. The player's decision to join either one of the factions happens during the first quests in the questline, which makes it more likely that a potential player might want to get to know the conflict better before committing to either of the sides.

The analysis follows a chronological availability of the scenes which means the player's potential to see these scenes in a certain amount of gameplay are higher in the scenes analyzed in 4.1 compared to scenes analyzed in 4.2. I decided that this was the best way to analyze the persuasion of the game as players are more aware of the nature of the factions during later parts of the game. Where applicable, I analyze the Imperial side of the conflict first, then the Stormcloaks, this was decided by a coin toss to remain neutral. All the examples in section 4 are material from Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim (2011). Square brackets denote my additions to the dialogue, with the purpose of clarifying context in the dialogue for readers, while ellipses (...) in the quote denote an omission.

### 4.1 Early game – Opening sequence and joining the two factions

The first scene analyzed in this section is the opening sequence. Due to its importance for the exposition of the story and specifically the setting of the civil war, I consider it to be the most relevant scene to be analyzed first. This scene heavily influences how the player is introduced to the factions of the civil war in Skyrim. The other two scenes analyzed in subsection 4.1 are the respective joining scenes and their follow-ups for the Imperials and the Stormcloaks, which give more context to the conflict and the motivations of the leaders of the factions and their most valued aides.

### 4.1.1 Opening sequence

The first scene of the game is an important one as it sets the theme for the civil war right in the beginning of the game. Naturally, it also includes persuasive techniques that are relevant to this analysis. The scene begins with the player on a cart with a Stormcloak soldier, a horse thief, and the leader of the Stormcloaks, Ulfric Stormcloak. The Imperials lead the player to Helgen, where the prisoners are to be executed, something that the player does not know at this moment. In this scene, the player has no dialog input of their own. One of the first things that is said to the player already includes similitude and othering as a Stormcloak soldier, Ralof, makes conversation with the player, to which the thief then ends up responding:

- (1) Ralof: You were trying to cross the border, right? Walked right into that Imperial ambush, same as us, and that thief over there.  
 Lokir [the Thief]: Damn you Stormcloaks. Skyrim was fine until you came along. Empire was nice and lazy. (...) You there [referring to the player]. You and me – we shouldn't be here. It's these Stormcloaks the Empire wants.  
 Ralof: We're all brothers and sisters in binds now, thief.

In example 1 Ralof utilizes similitude by adding the phrase *same as us*, provoking the player to feel belonging with the Stormcloaks. He also utilizes othering with identification as a tool to undermine the Imperials by referring to the Imperial ambush as *that Imperial ambush*. Curiously, he also uses *that* for the thief in the wagon too, othering the thief and possibly trying to persuade the player that the Stormcloaks do not suffer thieves. Lokir, the horse thief, utilizes similitude and othering like Ralof. The phrase *You and me* and *we* shows similitude, as Lokir tries to persuade the player of their similarity with him. Lokir also refers to the Stormcloaks as *these Stormcloaks*, utilizing othering, and if the player feels similitude with Lokir, then they may be othered from the Stormcloaks too. Interestingly, Ralof then seems to concede, and utilizes similitude again to try to persuade in this case both Lokir and the player that they are in this situation together. He still calls Lokir by the word *thief* which seems to indicate the use of pathos with the persuasive technique of identification, showing that Ralof believes Lokir to be disposed to unscrupulous activity, possibly affecting the players view on the Stormcloaks pathos.

The dialogue continues with Lokir addressing Ulfric and asking who they are, since Ulfric is gagged, Ralof answers. Ralof and Lokir talk about Ulfric as the leader of the rebellion, getting out some of the necessary exposition for the player, but also giving some cultural points of identification. These, however, are unpersuasive at this moment as the player might not know

what the terms *Jarl of Windhelm*, and *Sovngarde* mean. Their conversation then turns to the possibility of the cart ride leading to the worst possible outcome, and Ralof asks Lokir where they are from, and mentions that *Nord's last thoughts should be of home*. The persuasiveness of this statement depends on how the player identifies with Nords at this point, but mentioning *home* with an identifier could certainly help with the player feeling identification.

The scene continues as Lokir asks for help from some of the gods of the Elder Scrolls universe. All but one of the gods referred to by Lokir are from the Imperial Pantheon, he does not refer to Talos, the god whose worship is now outlawed at this point, but rather Shor, a god from the old Nordic Pantheon. These references, however, are unpersuasive for those who have never played an Elder Scrolls game before, as the player might not know anything about these cultural identifications. Although, asking the gods for help might provide a point of cultural identification for the player themselves, depending on their potential religiosity.

The scene continues and an imperial soldier tells the Imperial General Tullius, that a headsman is ready. The cart enters Helgen, and Ralof spots Tullius talking to a Thalmor agent, a faction in the High Elven Aldmeri Dominion. He proposes their reasoning for being there in example 2.

- (2) Ralof: Look at him, General Tullius the Military Governor. And it looks like the Thalmor are with him. Damn elves. I bet they had something to do with this.

Example two is an interesting one, as it sets one of the claims and argumentation points of Stormcloaks against the Empire. Ralof uses similitude to first combine the Imperials with the Thalmor, the former enemies, now according to him working together. Ralof also uses othering to distance the Stormcloaks from the Thalmor by using *they* and calling them *damn elves*, utilizing identification and othering with the word *elves* and *damn* respectively. *I bet they had something to do with this* also utilizes the persuasive technique *claim* as Ralof seems to think that the Thalmor have something to do with the capture of the Stormcloaks. A player familiar with the game, or someone playing the game after finishing it, knows that this is not true, however, as the Thalmor want the civil war to continue and are petitioning for Tullius to hand over Ulfric and the Stormcloaks, presumably then, to later let them free “by accident”.

The cart continues through Helgen, where Ralof makes some remarks about his past, experiences in Helgen. One of the things Ralof says is quite interesting, shown in example 3.

- (3) Ralof: Funny, when I was a boy, Imperial walls and towers used to make me feel so safe.

Example 3 could be interpreted in various ways. One could argue that it utilizes inclination to succeed as Ralof mentions the past successes of the Imperials as being something that gives safety to others. However, the usage of the words *used to* also implies that this is no longer the case, however this may be due to Ralof now actively working against the Empire as a Stormcloak rather than the Empire's inability to provide safety to its citizens. It is very unlikely that Ralof as a Stormcloak would argue that the Empire still provides safety for its people, so the interpretation that the Empire cannot provide safety to anyone at this moment is more likely to be intended.

The carts eventually stop, and the Imperials direct the prisoners out of the carts for identification. Before the player and Ralof exit the cart, however, Ralof remarks that the gods should not be kept waiting on them. He, again, uses *us* to refer to him and the player character, utilizing similitude, and referring to the gods, which also draws on the player's possible religiosity through identification. The scene, then, continues.

- (4) Lokir: No! Wait! We're not rebels!  
 Ralof: Face your death with some courage, thief.  
 Lokir: You've got to tell them! We weren't with you! This is a mistake!

In example (4), Lokir, once again, tries to use othering, while including the player character in the persuasion with similitude. Ralof, once again, is othering Lokir, the horse thief, by first utilizing a possible cultural identification of Nords and connecting Nord culture with the word *courage*. He, once again, utilizes the identification of *thief* for Lokir, distancing the Stormcloaks from him. Lokir explicitly then others himself and the player character from the Stormcloaks, by saying that he and the player character are not with the Stormcloaks. Lokir attempts to further persuade that he is not a criminal with a claim *this is a mistake*.

As the names of the prisoners are called, Ralof says that following Ulfric has been an honor, showing at least some degree of two persuasive techniques: a claim and inclination to succeed. Claim, since there is no context to Ulfric's possible honorable conduct, but also an inclination to succeed, since he refers to it having been an honor to serve Ulfric. Lokir tries to escape after being called out and gets killed by the imperials. After this is then the first time the Imperials speak directly to the player:

- (5) Imperial Captain [unnamed]: Anyone else feel like running?

Hadvar [an Imperial soldier]: Wait. You there. Step forward. Who are you? [referring to the player]

This is the first time the player has some agency in the game. After these lines, the player is shown the character creation interface. The character is shown from a second person perspective, presumably for the ease of the character creation, but other interpretations are possible, one could argue that it is how the Imperials now see your character, and this is reinforced by the fact that Hadvar's reaction to your player character depends on their race. Example 6 showcases three out of nine possible options Hadvar can say, depending on the player character's race:

- (6) Hadvar: You picked a bad time to come home to Skyrim, kinsman. [PC is a Nord, possibility of saying kinswoman if the player character is a woman]  
 Hadvar: You with one of the trade caravans, Khajiit? Your kind always seems to find trouble. [PC is a Khajiit, a race of cat-like people]  
 Hadvar: Another refugee? Gods really have abandoned your people, Dark Elf. [PC is a Dark Elf]

Hadvar's reaction to different races of Elder Scrolls is interesting to analyze. He utilizes cultural identification for all these player character race choices, with the words *home to Skyrim*, *kinsman/kinswoman*, *Khajiit* and *Dark Elf*. The word kinsman can also be thought to utilize similitude, since it refers to the shared heritage of the player character and Hadvar. Othering is present in both non-Nord choices, as Hadvar uses words such as *Your kind* for the Khajiit and *your people* for the Dark Elf. This can cause a positive persuasive effect as a Nord player character, since there is no othering, while the other races have some kind of othering effect, undermining the ethos of Hadvar and the Empire. After the player character's execution is decided, Hadvar apologizes, showing *self-criticism* and trying to reinforce his ethos. He says that the player character's remains will be sent to their respective homeland, calling the homelands of the respective race by their proper name. In the case of the Nord player character, he remarks that at least they die in their homeland, utilizing more of identification in his persuasion. He also shows some cultural knowledge of the peoples of Elder Scrolls, possibly pointing out some of *expertise* in his ethos. Throughout the opening sequence, when the player character is referred to by the imperials, they are referred to as a prisoner or according to their race. Calling someone a *prisoner*, like the word *thief*, has a negative connotation and as such this can undermine the Empire's pathos when it comes to the persuasion of the player, by not utilizing positive connotation.

Before the execution begins, Tullius confronts Ulfric. Since Ulfric is gagged, he is unable to respond to Tullius:

- (7) Tullius: Ulfric Stormcloak. Some here in Helgen call you a hero. But a hero doesn't use a power like the Voice to murder his king and usurp his throne. [Ulfric grunts through his gag]. You started this war, plunged Skyrim into chaos, and now the Empire is going to put you down, and restore the peace.

This dialog in example (7) is directed towards Ulfric, but it can also be seen as Tullius *justifying* the actions of the Empire. Tullius concedes that people call Ulfric a hero, but also *argues* that heroes do not use their powers to usurp their king's thrones. *Voice* here refers to the ability of some Nords to project their voice into magic. This is a very rare power, taught only to a select few and is not supposed to be used for the benefit of the user themselves, but rather for the glory of the Gods, as explained by the Greybeards later in the main questline to the player. This fact may cause players who have played the game before to consider Ulfric's pathos, as he is misusing a culturally significant ability of the Nords. Tullius utilizes more argumentation and logic as he refers to the cause of the war, Ulfric, and the logic of putting him down and restoring the peace.

The sequence continues with the last rites of the soon to be executed Stormcloaks and the player, showcased in example 8:

- (8) Priestess: As we commend your souls to Aetherius, blessings of the Eight Divines upon you (...)  
 Stormcloak soldier: For the love of Talos, shut up and let's get this over with. (...)  
 My ancestors are smiling at me, Imperials. Can you say the same?

There are a couple of cultural identification related persuasive techniques in play in example (8). First is the mention of *Aetherius*, the place that holds the possible afterlives for the people of Elder Scrolls. Nords believe in their afterlife being in *Sovngarde* and as such the mention of *Aetherius* might seem inconsiderate to Nord players, if they know this. Conversely, non-Nord players might feel identification with the word *Aetherius* since it should comprise multiple afterlives. The religious significance in example 8 comes from the nature of the Imperial Pantheon, which is also known as *the Nine Divines* and sometimes in the context of Skyrim as *the Eight Divines* or just *the Nine* and *the Eight* respectively. The priestess refers to them as the Eight Divines, while the Stormcloak soldier who interrupts the rites invokes *Talos* in his line.

Talos is the missing god from the Eight Divines, and it is one of the reasons why many Stormcloaks fight against the Empire. The significance of this was explained in subsection 1.1. A player who has played Elder Scrolls games before Skyrim, knows this, but does not know why Talos is excluded from the Divines, and as such the persuasion relating to identification does not deliver the effect that might be expected, since it is very likely that the player at this point does not know enough about the political situation of the game's setting. In addition, the Stormcloak soldier utilizes a claim by referring to his ancestors and their approval, and utilizing deference to let the Imperials think for themselves if their ancestors would do the same. This deference can then lead to the player character thinking of the ethos of both the Stormcloak soldier, and the Imperials conducting the execution.

After the soldier is executed, people voice their opinions on the situation. The townsfolk call the execution justice and call for the death of the Stormcloaks. One Stormcloak soldier calls the Imperials *bastards*. Both utilize othering combined with identification. *Death to the Stormcloaks* and *you Imperial bastards* both have a word of identification, namely *the Stormcloaks* and *Imperial*, and they are combined with othering words such as *death to* and *you*. The player is then asked to go to the execution block, but soon chaos erupts as the player's execution is interrupted by a dragon attacking Helgen. This is also where Ralof for the first time refers to the player character by their origin. If the player is a Nord, he refers to them as a kinsman/kinswoman, if not then he refers to the player character by their respective race, showing cultural identification.

Tullius takes charge of the situation in the town as the player character is led to a tower by Ralof. Example 9 includes Ralof talking with now ungagged Ulfric:

- (9) Ralof: Jarl Ulfric! What is that thing? Could the legends be true?  
 Ulfric: Legends don't burn down villages. We need to move. Now!  
 Ralof: Up through the tower, let's go!

Ralof uses the word *jarl*, a possible point of identification, although the player does not have much context on its significance at this point in the game, unless they have played an Elder Scrolls game before or know about Jarls from history. *That thing* could be taken as othering, but considering the thing that is being pointed out is a dragon, it has no real persuasive weight. *The legends* could refer to a point of identification for the Nords if there are legends about the dragons. Ulfric's line in the dialogue of example (9) is potentially showing expertise for Ulfric, as he makes an immediate claim on the legend of dragons, potentially also reinforcing his logos.

While Ulfric's use of the word *we* does not explicitly include the player, Ralof's use of *let's go* is directed towards the player, and as such utilizes similitude.

The player, after escaping the tower, gets separated from the Stormcloaks and then encounters Hadvar who is defending some townspeople:

(10) Hadvar: Haming [a boy in Helgen], you need to get over here. Now! That a boy, you're doing great. (...) Still alive, prisoner? [referring to the player] Keep close to me if you want to stay that way. Gunnar, take care of the boy. I have to find General Tullius and join the defense.

Gunnar: Gods guide you, Hadvar.

Hadvar utilizes several persuasive techniques in this encounter. He is showing expertise, by mentioning the townspeople by name, reinforcing his ethos. He utilizes the identification of *prisoner* for the player, and as this identification has a negative connotation, it might affect the player's view on his pathos. He argues that the player should stay close to him, if they want to stay alive, utilizing argumentation. This can also seem like a threat to the player, which might undermine the rationality of the argument. He defers to Gunnar, by asking him to keep Haming safe. He also defers to Tullius and his presumable expertise in the defense of Helgen. Gunnar saying *gods guide you* is also a point of identification, showing that the townspeople of Helgen do identify with the Empire to some degree at least.

The player follows Hadvar until they make it to the Helgen keep. There they come across Ralof, and the two soldiers have a brief exchange.

(11) Hadvar: Ralof! You damned traitor, out of my way!  
 Ralof: We're escaping, Hadvar. You're not stopping us this time.  
 Hadvar: Fine. I hope that dragon takes you all to Sovngarde.  
 Ralof: You! Come on, into the keep! [to player]  
 Hadvar: With me, prisoner! Let's go!

After the dialogue shown in example (11), the player makes their first choice in who they choose to follow into the keep. This choice does not lock the player out of any later options, but it gives them additional context for the side they choose. The player is given the last persuasive lines in the opening scene in example (11), so they have to make their choice based on what has happened so far. In his line, Hadvar others Ralof by calling him *you damned traitor*, he uses the word *traitor* as a point of identification, and *you damned* as othering. He does not use the word *our*, but rather *my* when yelling *out of my way*, which shows that he does not use similitude here to persuade the player to be a part of his group. Ralof does use *we*, but he is potentially

only referring to the Stormcloaks rather than him and the player, nevertheless the player can feel included in the word *us*, potentially increasing his ethos. Because Ralof uses *you* in his next line, however, the possibility of him including the player in the *us* is unlikely. Hadvar explicitly still uses the word *prisoner* to refer to the player. Both Ralof and Hadvar use inclusive language as they ask the player to join them in the keep. Ralof uses the expression *come on* and Hadvar uses *let's go*, both utilizing similitude to get the player to join them.

#### 4.1.2 Joining the Imperials

After their escape from Helgen the player is given directions to join the faction they sided with in the opening scene. Hadvar points the player to Solitude, the current capital of Skyrim, while Ralof points the player to Windhelm, the city from which the Stormcloaks are led by Jarl Ulfric. In this subsection I analyze the joining scene of the Imperial Legion. If the player decides to go to Solitude to join the Imperials, they hear General Tullius and Legate Rikke, an officer in the Legion, discussing the current state of the war. In this discussion, the player character is probably not thought to be hearing the discussion, since at this point, they are unaffiliated, and it is unlikely that the two high-ranking officers would discuss these things in the presence of someone who is not a part of the Legion. The two discuss Ulfric's war in example (12)

- (12) Rikke: That's not what my scouts report, sir. Every day more join his cause. Riften, Dawnstar and Winterhold support him.  
 Tullius: It's not a cause. It's a rebellion.  
 Rikke: Call it whatever you like, General. The man's going to try to take Whiterun.

Rikke calls Ulfric's war a *cause* while Tullius refers to it as a *rebellion*. These two words are used as tools of identification, *rebellion* does not necessarily have a negative connotation, but in comparison to *cause* it seems more negative.

The discussion turns to the Jarl of Whiterun and their unwillingness to side with either side. Tullius, frustrated at the Nord customs, shows some othering with identification in example (13)

- (13) Tullius: You people and your damn Jarls.  
 Rikke: Sir? You can't force a Nord to accept help he hasn't asked for.  
 Tullius: If Ulfric's making a move for Whiterun, then we need to be there to stop him. Draft another letter with the usual platitudes, but this time share some of your intelligence regarding Ulfric's plans. Embellish if you have to. We'll let it seem like it's his idea.

Rikke: Yes, Sir.

Tullius: You Nords and your bloody sense of honor.

Tullius refers to Rikke and her people, the Nords, in his first line in example (13). He others them by using the words *you* and *your damn Jarls*. *Jarl* is a word of identification: They are the leaders of the Holds of Skyrim, such as Ulfric being the Jarl of Windhelm. Rikke explains the cultural context, offering Tullius, and potentially the player, some insight on how Nords feel about getting help. Tullius uses logic to justify the Legion's possible presence in Whiterun. Tullius' line in example (13) *embellish if you have to* might seem dishonorable and as such might affect the player's view on Tullius' ethos, but the use of logic might dissuade the player from thinking that. Tullius keeps othering the Nords in his last line in example (13), potentially weakening Tullius's ethos.

After the discussion the player can talk to Tullius about joining the Legion. He is initially wary about the player's previous status of being a prisoner of the Empire, but the player can either refer to helping Hadvar escape Helgen, if they followed Hadvar into the keep, or they can say that they want to fight for the Empire. Tullius calls the player *resourceful* due to their escape from Helgen, showing deference to them and also believes in their inclination to succeed. He also says that the player's imprisonment may have just been *a terrible misunderstanding*, while this may not seem relevant from a persuasive viewpoint, the tone in his voice seems ironic, which could be the use of a figure of speech to persuade the player that they are welcome in the Legion, no matter the past of their character. Tullius then points the player character to Rikke, who is in charge of new recruits.

When the player talks to Rikke, she says that she has *a good feeling about them*, showing deference to the player. The player is given a task of clearing out a fort that is being occupied by bandits for their joining, a special task since Rikke believes them to not be *regular militia material*. This confidence in the player comes from their survival of Helgen, and can be thought of as Rikke, like Tullius, believing in the player character's inclination to succeed, Rikke even says that they would like to see the player character's capabilities. Before sending the player character off, Rikke starts using the word *soldier* to refer to the player character, showing identification with the Legion, even before they are officially inducted into the Legion.

After returning from their task to be officially welcomed into the Legion, Rikke and Tullius once again discuss the war. This time, the topic lands on the *Jagged Crown*, one artifact thought to bring prestige to its holder in *the moot*, the event where the Jarls decide their next

High King or Queen. Example (14) showcases some language used in this discussion, which may still affect the player's opinion on joining the Legion.

- (14) Tullius: Tell me again, why I'm wasting men chasing after a fairy tale.  
 Rikke: If Ulfric gets his hand on that crown, it won't be a fairy tale. It'll be a problem.  
 Tullius: Don't you Nords put any stock in your own traditions? I thought the Moot chose the king. We're backing Elisif. When the Moot meets, they'll do the sensible thing.  
 Rikke: Not everyone's agreed to the Moot. You've been here long enough to know that Nords aren't always sensible. We follow our hearts.

The discussion keeps going on after this but after some time, Tullius agrees to send people to look for the Jagged Crown, including the player who he refers to now with their rank of *Auxiliary*. This is before the player has joined, however, which indicates that Tullius identifies the player as part of the Legion at this point already. *Fairy tale* in example (14) is a metaphor for the Jagged Crown, a two-pronged meaning, since for one, its existence is of dispute, and its prestige is partly not understood by the Imperial General. Rikke uses logic in her first line *problem and not a fairy tale* and brings up Ulfric, since he, as a Nord, supposedly understands the benefits of having the crown. Tullius shows some cultural identification with the Nords, as he mentions the Moot. He also others the Nords again by saying *you Nords*. He brings up Elisif, the current Jarl of Solitude and the widow of the previous High King, giving a possible point of identification if the player has learned of them previously, which at this point is likely. Rikke utilizes some cultural identification in her second line, talking about Nords and their potential of not being sensible, but rather choosing to *follow their hearts*.

The player now needs to choose if they are ready to join the Legion officially, Rikke points the player to Tullius, who administers the oath. Since the player has to take an oath before joining either the Stormcloaks or the Imperials it is interesting to look at what is said in their respective oaths. Example (15) showcases the oath for joining the Legion.

- (15) Upon my honor I do swear undying loyalty to the Emperor, Titus Mede II, and unwavering obedience to the officers of his great Empire. May those above judge me, and those below take me, if I fail in my duty. Long live the Emperor! Long live the Empire!

Much of the oath is about loyalty to the Emperor, in this case *Titus Mede the second*, but it is possible that the player has killed the Emperor before during the story of another major questline, if this is the case the oath omits the Emperor's name. Emperor of course being a point of identification for the citizens of the Empire. *Officers* are also a point of identification, specifically inside the Legion's command structure. The oath for the Imperial Legion is heavy on the

side of identification, and if the player does not identify with these points of identification, the oath itself may seem extremely non-persuasive to the player. The player can decline the oath, in which case Tullius tries to persuade the player to join. Tullius defers to the player if they decline to join, saying that the Legion is ready for them when they change their mind. He also mentions Rikke's belief in the abilities of the player, and agrees with them, showing more deference to the player. He refers to the citizens of the Empire in their *days of greatest need* and the potential glory that is gained by serving the Emperor and his citizens, showing logic that may be persuasive to the player who wants to earn glory.

After joining the Legion, the player can ask for more information about the origins of Tullius and Rikke, and their opinions on the war. Since they are the face of the Legion in Skyrim, at least for the player, I consider it important to look at their motives and the potential persuasion that emerges from those, also since the player chooses to ask these things from the two, it also shows some agency related persuasion from the two. If the player asks about the Legion's presence in Skyrim from Tullius, he refers to Skyrim as a province of the Empire, which is an identification point for the citizens of the Empire. He also says that if they were not present in the provinces, especially in Skyrim, they would fall into barbarism and lawlessness. And he justifies saying this by referring to *Ulfric's little rebellion*. If the player asks whether Tullius has always lived in Skyrim, he refers to his homeland of Cyrodiil, the homeland of the Imperials. This is a possible point of identification, and its strength may be raised if the player played the previous installment of Elder Scrolls, Oblivion, since it is set in Cyrodiil.

Rikke uses more identification related arguments for the Legion in her answers. Her parents were legionnaires, which gives a familial point of identification for her. She calls herself *a daughter of Skyrim*, which is extremely interesting since this is language that is used only by Stormcloaks, and never by anyone else in the Legion. The juxtaposition of an Imperial-aligned Legate using identification that is used by the Stormcloaks is interesting and it shows that even if the player considers themselves to be a son or a daughter of Skyrim, they still have a possible place in the Legion. If the player points out the dichotomy, Rikke says that all the Nords of the Empire love Skyrim and talks about Ulfric's past as a member of the Imperial army and his role in the war against the Aldmeri Dominion, showing her expertise. Interestingly, Rikke also calls Ulfric a *self-serving egomaniac*, a point of identification which is also a theme that appears often in the persuasion against the Stormcloaks, even in some Stormcloak-aligned people, such as Jarl Laila of Riften. Rikke also refers to one of the common talking points of the Empire, that the Legion is the only hope that Skyrim and the other provinces of the Empire have against potential aggression from the Aldmeri Dominion. If the player asks Rikke about the ban on the

worship of Talos, she dismisses the player by pointing out that she is not a politician, but a soldier. She uses identification to persuade the player to drop the problematic topic, which might affect the player's view on the pathos of the Empire.

#### 4.1.3 Joining the Stormcloaks

The initial discussion that Ulfric and Galmar have as the player enters Windhelm, and its palace of kings, is much more expansive compared to the discussion that Tullius and Rikke have. While the discussion of Tullius and Rikke lasts for about a minute, Ulfric and Galmar talk for about three minutes, and their talk moves away from Whiterun into the motivations of the two for taking on the Empire. Ulfric believes Balgruuf, the Jarl of initially neutral Whiterun, to come around, because he is *a true Nord*, showing common identification technique for the Stormcloaks. Galmar refutes this by pointing out that Balgruuf is more likely to be affected by the Imperials, since they have intercepted couriers carrying messages that indicate that the Empire is pressuring Whiterun. Ulfric asks what Galmar would have him do, to which Galmar responds with *if he's not with us, he's against us* showing argumentation. This logic may be persuasive to the player if they believe that neutrality is a good enough reason to consider someone to be against their cause.

Ulfric's and Galmar's discussion turns to the past killing of Torygg, the previous High King, showcased in example (16)

- (16) Galmar: I still say you should take them all out like you did Deadking Torygg.  
 Ulfric: Torygg was merely a message to the other Jarls. Whoever we replace them with will need the support of our armies.

Galmar refers to the Imperial-aligned Jarls with *them all*, and likens them to Torygg, also using a portmanteau of High King and Dead to create a word *deadking* referring to Torygg's previous occupation as the High King and his current state of being dead. This portmanteau works as identification, potentially either reducing the player's pathos or increasing it depending on how the player views Ulfric's killing of Torygg. Galmar also shows no consideration for the people under the Imperial-aligned Jarls saying *let them die with their false kings* showing othering for the Imperial-aligned Nords. To which Ulfric responds with expertise, talking about their past as soldiers, and knowing the potential cost of freedom. Ulfric talks about the people's need to think of their families, showing consideration and not judging them too harshly for their indecision, showing deference. Galmar responds to this by saying that the sons and daughters of

Skyrim follow Ulfric's banner, and that they are their families. To which Ulfric says *well put, friend* showing both identification with the word *friend* and deference to Galmar, by saying *well put*.

The discussion turns to the motives of the two men. Ulfric asks Galmar why he fights for him, to which Galmar responds that he'd *follow him to the depths of Oblivion*, showing identification with the word *Oblivion*, this can be persuasive if the player has played the previous game, which has the player exploring Oblivion. He also possibly utilizes inclination to succeed for Ulfric, since Oblivion is a dangerous place. Ulfric, not happy with the answer, wants to hear Galmar's reasoning outside of following him, showing more deference to his friend. To which Galmar responds that he'd *die before elves dictate the fates of men* showing othering for the elves, which can be persuasive depending on how the player views elves in the Elder Scrolls universe and showing a justification for his role in the rebellion.

Galmar asks if Ulfric does not feel the same about his justification, which prompts Ulfric to give a response, showcased in example (17).

- (17) Ulfric: I fight for the men I've held in my arms, dying on foreign soil. I fight for their wives and children, whose names I heard whispered in their last breaths. I fight for we few who did come home, only to find our country full of strangers wearing familiar faces. I fight for my people impoverished to pay the debts of an Empire too weak to rule them yet brand them criminals for wanting to rule themselves! I fight so that all the fighting I've already done hasn't been for nothing. I fight... because I must.

Ulfric's speech in its entirety can be thought of as justification, but it is important to look at persuasion in the individual sentences. First, Ulfric refers to his comrades in arms who died defending the Empire in the Great War, showing expertise and deference. He also calls Cyrodiil, where most of the fighting happened on *foreign soil* showing othering for the heartland of the Empire. He refers to the children and wives of the fallen soldiers which could be thought of as a claim, depending on whether the player feels Ulfric is being honest in his speech. He utilizes similitude for the other Nord veterans, and others the people that stayed behind by calling them *strangers wearing familiar faces*. This can also be thought of as identification, as *familiar faces* can refer to Nords, while *strangers* can refer to Ulfric thinking of the lack of their Nord-like qualities, whatever those are. *My people*, most likely referring to the Nords, could exclude those who align themselves with the Empire, but from Ulfric's previous discussion with Galmar it is unlikely that he excludes them in this instance. He considers the Nords to have been paying the

price of Empire's failure to defend the interests of its citizens, most likely referring to the banning of the worship of Talos, since he talks about branding them as criminals, showing identification. The two last sentences of his speech then show further justification.

After this speech the two men turn to other matters, and the player can address Ulfric about joining the Stormcloaks. Like Tullius, Ulfric is initially wary of the player, but the player can refer to having helped Ralof out of Helgen, if they did so, or talk about joining the Stormcloaks to fight the Legion. If the player refers to having helped Ralof, Ulfric is receptive to their joining, but unlike Tullius, Ulfric still believes that the player has been a criminal by referring to the player's *criminal past*, but he acquiesces to the player's request to join the Stormcloaks if they promise to uphold *honor and integrity* while in their ranks; this shows othering, but also deference if the player believes their player to have been a criminal in the past. Curiously, if the player says that they are there to fight the Empire, Ulfric is initially way more positive about their joining calling them an *able fighter*, referring to the player's inclination to succeed and saying that the player has a point in their reason for joining the cause, showing deference. He still refers to the criminal past of the player but says that it *seems we are all branded criminals these days*, utilizing similitude and a claim.

The player is then to talk to Galmar about joining the Stormcloaks. Galmar asks for the player's motivations for joining the cause and refers to them with different points of identification depending on their race, some of these are showcased in example (18).

- (18) Galmar: Why's a foreigner want to fight for Skyrim? [PC is one of the human races, **including** a Nord] [OR] Why's an elf want to fight for Skyrim? [PC is one of the elven races] [OR] Why's a cat want to fight for Skyrim? [PC is a Khajiit]  
 Player: Skyrim is my home. [OR] I want to fight the Empire. I'll bleed for the chance to do so [OR] So, you only take Nords? [PC is not a Nord]

Whatever the race of the player character, Galmar others the player. For human races he others them by using the word *foreigner*, this word is used even for Nord player characters. For elven races the word used is *elf* which might not seem like othering, but considering the hatred many Nords have for elves, it can be taken in that way. Referring to Khajiit as *cats* is derogatory in Elder Scrolls universe, and as such can be thought of as othering. All these words can cause the player to doubt the pathos of Galmar.

Choosing to say that Skyrim is the home of the player character, Galmar defers to the player by saying *fair enough*, and then asking if they are willing to die for their homeland to which the player has the same option of telling that they want to fight the Empire, or saying

that that fighting for their home is the reason for their willingness to join the cause. If the player is playing a non-Nord character, the player can inquire about the Stormcloaks not taking anyone who is not a Nord, and since there are no generic Stormcloak soldiers who are of other races than Nords, it is interesting to look at how Galmar responds. The discussion is showcased in example (19).

- (19) Player: So, you only take Nords?  
 Galmar: You mistake me. I'm not saying no – just wondering about your intentions. We are not looking for sellswords. The Stormcloaks need dedicated men and women who're devoted to the cause and willing to die for it.  
 Player: Skyrim is home to more than just Nords.  
 Galmar: Fair enough. But are you willing to die for your home?

The interaction in example (19) shows that the player, at the very least, is not declined the joining based on their character's race. The player character uses *Nords* as a point of identification, to which Galmar responds with an identification of a *sellsword*. Galmar seems to believe it is important that the people who join are dedicated to the cause. Galmar defers to the player's reasoning, that Skyrim is not only a home for the Nords, but other people too, possibly increasing the player's perception of his ethos. In addition, Galmar says *men and women*, utilizing similitude by not excluding either gender from joining. Since the initial othering from example (18) is present for even Nord player characters, it seems Galmar does not care too much about the race of the people joining Stormcloaks, but rather their drive, which is also his reasoning for questioning their background, utilizing logic.

Galmar sends the player to kill an ice wraith, an old Nord custom of coming of age, now utilized for the people wanting to join the Stormcloaks. This is cultural identification and may be persuasive to the players who value things like coming-of-age rituals. After returning from their task, Ulfric and Galmar are in the process of discussing the Jagged Crown. Interestingly, Ulfric does not seem to think too highly of the crown either, calling its pursuit a waste of resources, much like Tullius, but unlike Tullius he does not even care about the Moot. Example (20) showcases a bit of the dialogue.

- (20) Galmar: The Jarls are upset. They don't all support you.  
 Ulfric: Damn the Jarls.  
 Galmar: They demand the Moot.  
 Ulfric: And damn the Moot! We should risk letting those milk drinkers put Torygg's woman on the throne? She'll hand Skyrim over to the elves on a silver plate.  
 Galmar: All the more reason then. The crown would legitimize your claim.  
 Ulfric: A crown doesn't make a king.

This exchange is an interesting one, since the Stormcloaks so far have used similitude and identification precisely to persuade the player of their ethos and pathos respectively. In example (20), however, Ulfric utilizes similar persuasion to Galmar's use of *deadking Torygg* in example (16). He others the Jarls by saying *damn the Jarls* and does not respect *the Moot*, an event of cultural significance for the Nords. He calls the Imperial-aligned Jarls *those milk drinkers*, utilizing othering with *those* and a metaphor with *milk drinkers*, he others Jarl Elisif by calling her *Torygg's woman*, and identifies her by relation to her now dead husband, possibly affecting the player's view on Ulfric's pathos. He utilizes logic for not agreeing to the Moot by saying that Skyrim would be *handed to the elves*. All of these are quite contentious ways of persuading Galmar and the player, which might affect the player's view on Ulfric's ethos, pathos, or logos depending on how the player feels about the various persuasive techniques and their use in example (20).

In the end, however, Ulfric yields to Galmar's reasoning when he mentions that the Jagged Crown *heralds back to time before jarls and moots*. This can be thought of as identification, since the current Nord culture is distinct to the older Nord culture, before their time as a province of the Empire, and as such, players who are more aware of the history of the Elder Scrolls universe, and specifically the Nords, might find this line of argumentation persuasive. Once Ulfric agrees to search for the Jagged Crown, he asks Galmar to take *the unblooded* with him, referring to the player character's new rank in the Stormcloak army, utilizing cultural identification with the name of the rank and similitude with the group inclusion.

After the exchange on Jagged Crown comes the time for the player to take their oath. The Stormcloak oath is shown in example (21)

(21) I do swear my blood and honor to the service of Ulfric Stormcloak Jarl of Windhelm and true High King of Skyrim. As Talos is my witness, may this oath bind me to death and beyond even to my lord as to my fellow brothers and sisters in arms. All hail the Stormcloaks, the true sons and daughters of Skyrim!

The first sentence in example (21) shows a lot of identification, precisely through Ulfric. *Jarl of Windhelm* is Ulfric's title. He is called *true High King of Skyrim*, showing that the Stormcloaks identify the man already as a High King, even before any decision before the Moot. *Talos* is of great importance to the Nords, and as such it is not surprising that he is mentioned in the oath to utilize identification. The player's oath binds them to their lord, Ulfric, and their fellow Stormcloaks, proving a point of similitude for the oath-takers. Finally, the Stormcloaks

are identified as the true sons and daughters of Skyrim, utilizing similitude and identification. Like with the Imperial Legion, the player can choose to not take the oath and postpone or change their mind on joining the Stormcloaks, in this case Galmar says that the player needs to commit to the cause or go and join the Legion. He tries to utilize othering to weaken the ethos of the Legion, by saying that *they take anyone with a pulse these days*.

## **4.2 Late game – Truce negotiation and the final battles of the factions on their respective sides**

The first scene analyzed in this section is a negotiation of a temporary truce between the Imperials and the Stormcloaks, as the player attempts to curry the favor of the Jarl of Whiterun in their attempt to stop the threat of dragons in Skyrim. This scene is extremely important as it hosts both heads of their respective factions in dialog and the player has very strong agency in how the negotiations proceed. The truce negotiation has many permutations, and as such I only analyze the neutral version of the negotiation, meaning that the player has joined neither of the factions at the start of the negotiations. There are versions for where the player has joined either of the factions, but since I want to look at both neutral and faction-aligned dialogue, the aligned dialogue is analyzed in the two other scenes in this section. The two scenes where the player is aligned with a respective faction are the final scenes of the civil war, where the player ends the civil war with their chosen side. I also analyze the comments that are given by Ulfric, Galmar, Rikke and Torygg in the Nord version of afterlife, *Sovngarde*, since these are also relevant for providing more answers for research question two. Since these scenes are later in their questlines, I believe they are good to analyze together in a subsection: The player can be assumed to have more knowledge regarding the conflict and all the key players are introduced earlier, so that they are also somewhat more familiar to the readers of the analysis.

### **4.2.1 Negotiating a Truce – Season Unending**

During the main questline, the player is asked to negotiate a truce between the Stormcloaks and the Imperials. The truce is needed so that the Jarl of Whiterun will allow the player to trap a dragon in his palace, and that dragon is then supposed to take the player to where Alduin is resting. The Jarl is unwilling to help the player, unless they have dealt with the civil war, whether that is through conquest in the civil war questline, or through the negotiation of the truce. The truce is only temporary and lasts until the player has finished the main questline. The

player gets to decide whether they ask Ulfric or Tullius to attend the peace council first, and the dialogue is slightly different, depending on whose attendance the player pursues first.

When Tullius and Ulfric are asked to attend the peace council they are both initially quite dismissive of the idea. In example (22) I first look at Tullius' lines.

- (22) Player: I have a message from the Greybeards.  
 Tullius: The Greybeards? What do those old hermits want with me?  
 Player: They're convening a peace council at High Hrothgar.  
 Tullius: Why? There's nothing to discuss as long as that traitor Ulfric is in arms against his rightful Emperor.  
 Player: We need a truce until the dragon menace is dealt with.  
 Tullius: They are getting to be a problem. But I wasn't sent to Skyrim to fight dragons. My job is to quell this rebellion and I intend to do just that, Dragons or no dragons.

In Tullius' second line he utilizes othering with identification when he refers to the Greybeards as *those old hermits*. He also others and identifies Ulfric in his second line by calling him *that traitor*. These persuasive techniques are used to dismiss the player's need for a truce. He also tries to persuade the player by referring to his position as a general of the Imperial Legion and the need to quell the rebellion with the persuasive technique of argumentation.

After example (22) the player is given options to persuade Tullius to attend the council. The player has different options depending on whether they chose to go to Tullius first, or if they went to Tullius after persuading Ulfric. The player can either attempt to argue the benefit of attendance from the point of view of the dragon threat, a position of strength gained from negotiations or the authority of the greybeards. If the player argues from the authority of greybeards, Tullius yields and agrees to attend, referring to the Nords seriousness when it comes to certain things, like the cultural authority that the Greybeards have. This may be persuasive to some, since Tullius shows consideration towards the Nords through cultural identification reinforcing his pathos.

If the player argues to the Imperial's possible position of strength in the war Tullius agrees to join the council. Tullius does however say that while the Empire is doing fine at the moment, they are overstretched because the Emperor has not authorized Tullius' requests for reinforcements because the Empire cannot afford to weaken its defense against the Aldmeri Dominion, utilizing self-criticism of the Empire to reinforce his ethos. He also reinforces his logos as he is showing logic on why the Empire does not have the reinforcements it needs.

If the player tries to argue their position from the dragon threat, Tullius will not be convinced unless the player character has high enough level in the speech skill, if so Tullius sees

the benefit of having a negotiation because Ulfric might see the need to attend the negotiations since the Stormcloaks might be suffering from the dragon attacks as well. This logic leads to Tullius having a favorable opinion on attending, since he does not show weakness by attending the council. If the player has already convinced Ulfric to attend the council Tullius is surprised but claims that Ulfric might be looking for an opportunity to talk about the *Empire's many crimes*, and while he sounds sarcastic in his tone, it is possible this could be taken as self-criticism. Tullius argues that Ulfric might be hoping for him to refuse to attend, since Ulfric wants to show that the empire is not being reasonable, and Tullius argues that he should attend so he can dash Ulfric's hopes. Tullius' many comments seem to reinforce both his logos and ethos mainly, with only one of his persuasive techniques utilizing pathos by showing he understands the importance some cultural things, namely the existence of the Greybeards.

Like Tullius, Ulfric is also dismissive of the possibility of attendance, but for different reasons. In example (23) the player meets Ulfric to get him to attend the council.

- (23) Player: I have a message from the Greybeards.  
 Ulfric: It's about time they turned their gaze from the heavens, back to our bleeding homeland. What do they want?  
 Player: They want to negotiate a truce until the dragon menace is dealt with.  
 Ulfric: I have the greatest respect for the Greybeards, of course. And the dragon attacks are a growing plague. But the political situation is still delicate. Not all the Jarls are fully committed to supporting me as High King. I can't afford to appear weak. I can't agree to this unless Tullius himself will be there.

In example (23) Ulfric utilizes cultural identification by speaking of his respect for the Greybeards, he also utilizes similitude and identification with *our bleeding homeland* showing that he does consider himself to be part of the same people, sharing a homeland, with the Greybeards. He also utilizes argumentation, as he talks about the political situation and his need to not appear weak.

With Ulfric, like Tullius, the player can tell that Tullius has agreed to attend if he has been convinced to attend already. To which Ulfric responds with *inclination to succeed* by mentioning that the Stormcloaks still hold half of Skyrim even with what the Empire has been sending at them. He claims that the Empire cannot stand to lose much more men. Like with Tullius, the player can argue for Ulfric's attendance from the point of view of the dragon attacks or from Greybeards prestige.

If the player tries to argue from the Greybeards prestige Ulfric has an interesting response.

- (24) Player: Showing respect to the Greybeards will increase your prestige.  
 Ulfric: I don't need you to teach me how to play high politics in Skyrim. But... you're right. There's nothing to be gained by refusing the Greybeards' request.  
 Player: So you'll come to the peace council?  
 Ulfric: Yes. I'll give Tullius one more chance to quit Skyrim with his tail between his legs.

In example (24) Ulfric utilizes many persuasive techniques. Firstly, he utilizes *expertise* by showing that he is more than capable of handling the politics of Skyrim on his own. And while he initially does not show deference in his response, ultimately, he defers to the player's argument by saying that the player is right. He also utilizes logic with his response, when he says that there is nothing to be gained from refusing to attend the council. There is also a metaphorical use in *tail between his legs*, which is a metaphor for fleeing due to fear, Ulfric uses this metaphor to weaken Tullius' pathos.

Finally, if the player tries to argue from the point of view of the dragon threat. Ulfric, like Tullius, can be persuaded with high enough level in speech for the player character. However, while lines with the dragon threat with Tullius are quite general to the dragon threat and related to no dragon in particular, the line with Ulfric is quite different. Example (25) showcases this.

- (25) Player: Politics be damned. Alduin has returned! (Persuade) [The player has the option to persuade Ulfric]  
 Ulfric: Alduin? The World-Eater of song and legend? If that's true... well, it changes the situation doesn't it? Even Tullius may be forced to talk sense in the face of such a threat.

In example (25) it is the player character who uses cultural identification with the mention of Alduin to persuade Ulfric to attend the council. Ulfric defers to the player, he also utilizes argumentation with the line *if that's true (...) it changes the situation*. The interesting thing with example (25) and the corresponding one for persuading Tullius is that in example (25) the talk is heavily influenced by cultural identification, because Alduin's legend of ending the world is a cultural thing for the Nords, and if the player identifies with the Nords this may cause them to feel persuaded by the Stormcloaks, since they get to see cultural identification with Ulfric. On the other hand, if the player does not find this identification persuasive, they might like the logical nature of the conversation with Tullius more.

Once the respective faction leaders have been convinced to attend the council meeting, the negotiations start when the player returns to the Greybeards in High Hrothgar. The parties involved in the negotiations are the Greybeards, who are holding the meeting, the Blades who are dedicated dragon-slayers and help the player in their pursuit of ending the threat of dragons. The Stormcloak delegation, which includes Ulfric and his right-hand man Galmar Stone-Fist and the Imperial delegation which includes Tullius, Legate Rikke, Elenwen who is the Thalmor ambassador in Skyrim and Elisif the Jarl of Solitude and the widow of the previous High King. The Jarl of Whiterun is also in attendance, and that is either Jarl Balgruuf in the neutral or Imperial version of the negotiations or Jarl Vignar if the player has taken Whiterun for the Stormcloaks in the civil war. In this analysis I look at the neutral version of the negotiations, where the player has not joined either of the sides in the civil war. There are many permutations on the negotiation, and this is only a scratch on the surface. However, the scope of the study does not allow a thorough analysis.

The first point of contention between the two sides in the negotiations is the presence of Elenwen. As the council is about to sit down for the negotiations, Ulfric speaks up.

- (26) Ulfric: No. You insult us by bringing her to this negotiation? Your chief Talos-hunter? [some chatter ensues].  
 Elenwen: I have every right to be at this negotiation. I need to ensure that nothing is agreed to here that violates the terms of the White-Gold Concordat.  
 Tullius: She's part of the Imperial delegation. You can't dictate who I bring to this council.

In example (26) there is the potential for the player to feel included in Ulfric's use of *us* if they align with the Stormcloak idea that the Thalmor should not be present in Skyrim. This utilizes similitude. Ulfric also calls Elenwen the Empire's *chief Talos-hunter* utilizing similitude again to connect Elenwen with the interests of the Empire. Tullius does this too, whether it is by his own opinion, or the need of the Empire is ambiguous from this statement. Tullius also justifies this by saying that Ulfric *can't dictate* the members of his delegation.

The player is then asked for their opinion on the matter, they can either send Elenwen away or allow her to stay for the negotiations. Ulfric addresses the player in example (27).

- (27) Ulfric: By Ysmir's beard, the nerve of those Imperial bastards, eh? To think that I would sit down at the same table with that... Thalmor bitch. Either she walks or I do.  
 Player: You're right. The Thalmor have no business here. [OR] What's the harm? Besides, Tullius doesn't really want her here either.

Ulfric employs few persuasive strategies here in example (27). Firstly, he invokes *Ysmir*, a god in the old Nordic Pantheon, utilizing identification. He uses othering in his second sentence strengthened with an expletive, othering Elenwen and possibly the Empire, if the player feels like the Thalmor and the Empire are working together, with *that... Thalmor bitch*. Ulfric gives an ultimatum, saying that it is a choice between him or Elenwen utilizing a claim. Ulfric does not actually follow through with his ultimatum even if the player lets Elenwen stay. Elenwen's presence in the negotiation has a minor effect, she generally stokes the fires between the two sides, as it is revealed during the main quest that the Thalmor want the civil war to go on without any major changes in the power balance.

If the player agrees to send Elenwen away, she makes a statement about not wanting to interfere in the civil war and leaves. Galmar utilizes othering/similitude as Elenwen leaves, saying to her that *Skyrim will never bow to the Thalmor. Unlike your Imperial friends here* sentiments like these are often given by the Stormcloaks as they argue against the Empire, they utilize similitude to connect the Empire with the Thalmor and, of course, other themselves from the Empire and the Thalmor. If the player lets Elenwen stay, Ulfric defers to the player, claiming that the Imperial delegation brought her as a *deliberate provocation*, and Ulfric wants to be seen as someone who cannot be pushed around. To which the player can then, again, either agree with Ulfric or try to argue to Ulfric that letting her stay would have to make Tullius give concessions later. Ulfric thinks it a mistake but defers to the player again, increasing the player's potential for respecting Ulfric's ethos. If Elenwen stays, she provokes Ulfric, but Ulfric does not take the bait.

The negotiations proceed as Ulfric takes a turn to speak about only attending the council to deal with the dragons. In this, he utilizes deference to the player, as he says that he is there only to arrange a truce so that the player can deal with the dragon menace. He does use identification also as a persuasive strategy by referring to the *Empire's unjust claim to rule over the free people of Skyrim*. Tullius rebukes him by asking if the council can get down to business. After a bit of formal proceedings led by Arngair, the speaker of the Greybeards, the negotiations start and Ulfric sets his first demand, shown in example (28)

- (28) Ulfric: We want control of Markarth. That's our price for agreeing to a truce.  
 Elisif: So that's why you're here, Ulfric? You dare to insult the Greybeards by using this council to advance your own position?  
 Tullius: Jarl Elisif, I'll handle this.  
 Elisif: General, this is outrageous! You can't be taking this demand seriously! I thought we were here to discuss a truce!

Tullius: Elisif, I said I'd handle it. Ulfric, you can't seriously expect us to give up Markarth at the negotiating table. You hope to gain in council what you've been unable to take in battle, is that it?

In his line, Ulfric uses *we* and *our*, again the player can feel included in this use of similitude if they align with the Stormcloaks. Elisif uses identification of *the Greybeards* assisted with a claim on Ulfric's character by invoking a possible insult to the Greybeards. Tullius does not defer to Elisif here, in fact quite the opposite, which is quite interesting and might cause the player to feel conflicted with the ethos of both Tullius and Elisif, since the Empire is taking control from the Jarl of Solitude in this negotiation, maybe it could be happening somewhere else too. Elisif uses the title General for Tullius, showing identification for the Empire, which is to be expected since she aligns with the Empire. In his last line Tullius uses argumentation to try to persuade that Ulfric is attempting to gain something without any real claim to it.

The council continues to talk about the Markarth issue, where Elisif utilizes othering with identification by calling Ulfric *that traitor*, Balgruuf, the Jarl of Whiterun, chimes in and asks if this is how the Empire pays the Jarls for their loyalty, utilizing similitude with the Jarls themselves by saying *our loyalty*. Tullius addresses these concerns by saying that the council was not his idea and claiming that the council is a waste of time and directing his comments in example (29) first to Ulfric and then to the player.

- (29) Tullius: You are a traitor to the Empire, and deserve a traitor's death. But I at least will negotiate in good faith. [turns to player] Since we're all here at your request, I'd like to hear what you think Markarth is worth.  
 Player: How about Riften? [OR] Winterhold seems like a fair trade.

Tullius utilizes othering for Ulfric, a claim that he is there to *negotiate in good faith* and finally a deference for the player by asking their opinion on what a fair exchange for Markarth is. The player's choice affects how the council views them. If they give Riften in exchange for Markarth, the Empire's delegation will be satisfied, on the other hand, if the player gives Winterhold in exchange, then the Stormcloak delegation is content. Riften is thought to be one the regions of Skyrim with more strategic importance, like Markarth is, while Winterhold has less strategic importance.

There are two reactions depending on who the player is seen as aiding in the negotiation. If Riften is chosen to be exchanged, the negotiations continue with a Stormcloak dissatisfaction, showcased in example (30)

- (30) Tullius: you heard the man [referring to the player], Ulfric. We've made you a fair offer. Are you serious about these talks, or are you just here to posture?  
 Ulfric: I expected better from you Dragonborn. I came here in good faith, and now it seems you help the Empire at every turn. As for you, General Tullius, I see now that Galmar was right. Talking to the Empire is just as useless as ever. If you think you can hold Markarth, you're as deluded as your Emperor when he signed away our freedom to the Thalmor. Skyrim will never again bow to your false Empire! Let's go Galmar, I should have listened to you in the first place.  
 Tullius: You always were a fool, Ulfric. You're no better at diplomacy than you are on the battlefield.

In example (30) Tullius defers to the player with *you heard the man*, also utilizing similitude by using *we* when talking about the offer. Ulfric then utilizes a few persuasive strategies. First, he directly addresses the player, utilizing their role as *dragonborn* for identification he also utilizes argumentation, first saying that he came to the negotiation in good faith and his good faith was not reciprocated by the player in *helping the Empire*. Secondly, he utilizes self-criticism as he says that Galmar was right. *Talking to the Empire is just as useless as ever* can be thought of as expertise, if the player sees it as if Ulfric has expertise in negotiating with the Empire, but there is no real evidence in the game to suggest that. Also, Ulfric utilizes othering and identification by calling the empire *your false Empire*. Tullius' last line in example (30) can be understood either as expertise, if the player remembers Tullius' capture of Ulfric in the beginning of the game, or a claim if taken in a more general sense.

Example (31) showcases then the option where the player chooses Winterhold to be exchanged for Markarth.

- (31) Tullius: [to the player] Fair enough. I was hoping you could put aside your loyalties for the greater good, but I see you're firmly in Ulfric's camp. Still... Winterhold would allow us to directly threaten the rebel supply lines out of Windhelm... (...)  
 Ulfric: The Dragonborn has spoken Tullius. Markarth will be ours. Now we'll see if there's anything behind your talk of good faith.  
 Tullius: I don't blame you, Dragonborn. You made the best of a bad situation. (...)

In example (31) Tullius others and identifies the player by saying that they are *in Ulfric's camp* and referring to their *loyalties*. Saying *Fair enough* does seem like Tullius agrees to a degree with the player, which does indicate a small amount of deference to the player. Tullius also utilizes logic by referring to the strategic strengths of holding Winterhold. Ulfric in example (31), like Tullius in example (30), uses deference to the player characters, also with the identification of *Dragonborn*. He also tries to undermine Tullius' premise of negotiating in good faith. Tullius shows explicit deference to the player, saying that they don't blame them, most

likely understanding that the Dragonborn's goal of defeating Alduin requires that they placate Ulfric. After example (31), Tullius talks about knowing Ulfric, and saying that he will not be satisfied with demanding just Markarth. He says that Ulfric will never defeat the Empire and that he is *sacrificing thousands for your own selfish ambition*, which can be taken as Tullius utilizing expertise in talking about the character of Ulfric. Many people in Skyrim agree, even on the Stormcloak side, that Ulfric's rebellion is partly due to his own ambition of wanting to be the High King.

Regardless of the choice that the player makes, the negotiation flares until one of the Blades, Esbern, tries to get the sides of the negotiation to remember the reason for the negotiation in the first place, the threat that Alduin poses. The last part of the negotiation follows this, and in it the delegation that has gained the least up till this point will make a demand. The negotiations end when the player has agreed to balance the losses and gains of the sides in the negotiation, or denied the demands of the side that is losing in the negotiations. The Stormcloak delegation will always demand for another Hold of Skyrim to be surrendered to them. The Imperial delegation can also ask this, but they can also ask for compensation for an event called *the massacre at Karthwasten*. Since the demands for the holds play very similarly, I decided to analyze the negotiation considering the events at Karthwasten for the final part of this section.

Interestingly, there are no clues to at what happened at Karthwasten in game, which means that the dialogue in example (32) is all that the player can ever know about the event. After the demand is set, the talk about it begins.

- (32) Legate Rikke: You slaughtered the very people you claim to be fighting for! True sons of Skyrim would never do such things.  
 Galmar: Damned Imperial lies! My men would never stoop to such methods, even in retaliation for your butchery at...  
 Ulfric: This is our homeland, Tullius. All the blood spilled in this war is on your head.  
 Tullius: You've been even-handed so far [to player, possibility of a different line if the player has favored the Stormcloaks or the Imperials more]. What do you say to our demand?  
 Player: Ulfric should compensate you for Karthwasten. [OR] Who's to say what happened at Karthwasten?

Rikke starts with a claim of the Stormcloaks crime. She then utilizes identification and argumentation in combination asserting that *true sons of Skyrim* would not commit such acts. Galmar repudiates the claim, by claiming that these are Imperial lies, utilizing othering and a claim. He then also utilizes a claim and identification when he says that *his men would never stoop to such methods*. He also tries to claim that this would not happen even in retaliation of

*the Empire's butchery* at somewhere, until Ulfric interrupts him. Ulfric utilizes similitude and identification by calling Skyrim *our homeland*, to which the player can feel included or not. He utilizes justification by saying that the *blood spilled in this war* is the fault of Tullius. Tullius utilizes deference to the player, asking for their opinion, and then the player can decide what to do with the demand. The player cannot know about the event, since there is no evidence in-game to point to anything relating to this event, so they have to choose depending on their instincts. If the player chooses to have Ulfric compensate for the massacre, then Tullius defers to the player by saying *well said* and then turns to Ulfric and says that Ulfric, for once, has to pay for his crimes, utilizing a claim that Ulfric has committed crimes and possibly showing expertise, if the player believes that Tullius is right on Ulfric's possible crimes. If the compensation is denied, Tullius says that the Empire, once again, pays for the crimes of others, indicating a claim once again because he is referring to paying the *crimes of others*.

After the demands have been gone through, the speaker of the Greybeards lists the terms of the truce. Then the side that the player is on in the conflict sticks around to discuss the plan that the player has for proceeding with the defeat of Alduin. If the player is neutral or on the side of the Imperials, then the Imperials stay, since the Jarl of Whiterun, who is initially neutral, sides with the Imperials in the end, if the player is on the side of the Stormcloaks then the Stormcloaks stay to advise them with their pursuit of Alduin.

#### 4.2.2 Battle of Windhelm – Imperial side

The Imperial victory is achieved through conquest of Skyrim culminating in the Battle of Windhelm. The player joins Tullius at the gates of Windhelm to fight Ulfric, Galmar and the last remaining Stormcloaks in the city. As the player arrives at the gates Tullius is giving a speech to his soldiers. Some of his lines are shown in example (33)

- (33) Tullius: (...) You have all fought bravely and sacrificed much to bring us to this point. (...) Ulfric thinks he can hide behind the walls of his castle. But we will fight our way in and drag him out through the rubble to face justice. (...) The Stormcloaks will fight like cornered rats. They will be fierce and crafty. But they are no match for Legionnaires. You are the best and brightest warriors in Tamriel. Professional soldiers, fearless and devastating. (...). Everyone, with me! For the Empire! For the Legion!

He starts his speech by talking about the bravery and sacrifices the legionnaires have made in bringing the Legion to this point, utilizing inclination to succeed in his persuasion. He talks about *Ulfric hiding in his castle* and that the legion is there to bring him *to face justice*, utilizing identification and othering: He and the legionnaires are on the side of justice, while Ulfric is

not. He likens the Stormcloaks to *cornered rats*, saying that they will be *fierce and crafty*, utilizing a metaphor and logic. He says that the Stormcloaks are no match for legionnaires, since they are *the best and the brightest warriors in Tamriel professional soldiers, fearless and devastating*, utilizing inclination to succeed and identification. After that, he talks about the emperor following the events of this day and the potential for the legionnaires to distinguish themselves for rewards, utilizing logic. The end of his speech utilizes similitude when he says *with me* and uses the war cry of the legion, utilizing identification.

After the speech the player fights their way through the streets of Windhelm to the Palace of the Kings. There the player character, Tullius, and Rikke confront Ulfric and Galmar. After entering the palace, Tullius yells Ulfric's name and his crimes of *insurrection*, which othering and identifies Ulfric as a traitor. He talks about the *murder of Imperial citizens*, utilizing othering and similitude and of *the assassination of King Torygg*, which utilizes identification. Finally he mentions Ulfric's *high treason against the Empire*, utilizing identification with othering for the Jarl. The Legion's officers ask Galmar and Ulfric to surrender peacefully first, to which they do not agree. Ulfric is unwilling because he does not want to *surrender Skyrim to a corrupt and dying Empire*, utilizing othering with identification for the Empire and identification for Skyrim. Rikke says that Skyrim does not belong to Ulfric, to which he replies that *he belongs to her*, utilizing similitude and identification by referring to Skyrim with the feminine third-person pronoun. Tullius calls the two Stormcloaks *traitors*, utilizing identification and then he gives the two men an ultimatum, either they surrender and face a public execution, or they face death now by his hands. He says that in the end he will *send their heads back to Cyrodiil*, utilizing identification for his homeland with a claim.

After this, the player, Tullius and Rikke skirmish with Ulfric and Galmar. Tullius yells out *die villain* at the beginning of this fight, showing othering and identification. After the fight is over, Galmar is killed and Ulfric is defeated, which leads to a short talk shown in example (34).

- (34) Tullius: Well Ulfric, you can't escape from me this time. Any last requests before I send you to... to wherever you people go when you die.  
 Rikke: Sovngarde... sir.  
 Tullius: Right. Well?  
 Ulfric: Let the Dragonborn be the one to do it. It'll make for a better song.  
 Tullius: [To player] Song or not, I just want it done.  
 Player: I've had my fair share of killing today. [OR] I won't give him the satisfaction.  
 [OR] I'll gladly kill him.

Tullius first utilizes expertise, referring to his capture of Ulfric slightly before the beginning of the story of the game. He fails to correctly identify Sovngarde, which might affect the player's view of his pathos. Rikke, however, correctly identifies Sovngarde, which then utilizes identification. Ulfric defers to the player first, preferring to have him be remembered in song being killed by the Dragonborn rather than the Imperial general. Tullius defers to the player, giving them the option of choosing how Ulfric is dealt with. If the first two options are chosen, Tullius kills Ulfric.

After Ulfric is dealt with, the dialogue continues, shown in example (35)

- (35) Rikke: Talos be with you... [To Ulfric]  
 Tullius: What was that, Legate?  
 Rikke: Nothing. Just saying goodbye.

Example (35) is not explicitly persuasive, but rather implicitly since the relevance of persuasion stems from identification. *Talos* is mentioned and Rikke's line show similitude between Her and Ulfric, since they both are veterans of the Great War and old war companions. Tullius uses the rank of Rikke, *legate* as a point of identification, which could be interpreted as him deliberately calling her by her rank, reminding her of her position as a legate of the Legion as someone who is not supposed to invoke Talos, since his worship is banned. The other interpretation is that his line is for show, he heard her but is choosing to ignore what she said, which is the more likely interpretation since he changes the topic after example (35). The two officers talk about the new candidate for the Jarl, Brunwulf Free-Winter, who is also a war veteran and well liked among the folk of Windhelm, especially with its non-Nord population, possibly providing the player with a point of identification.

Tullius tells the player that it has been an honor to have them by his side in the fight, showing deference and similitude. He calls the player by their rank in the Legion, *legate*, utilizing identification. After this, he moves outside the palace to give a speech to the rest of the legionnaires. Parts of the speech are shown in example (36)

- (36) Tullius: The rebellion is over. Ulfric Stormcloak is dead. [Legionnaires cheer] His head will be sent to Cyrodiil where it will adorn a spike on the walls of the Imperial City. Let this day be a final warning to all who would still call themselves Stormcloaks. We are turning the city over to Brunwulf Free-Winter, an honorable and faithful man. (...) In appreciation of your exemplary service, I am doubling your pay and compensation to the widows of your fallen comrades. I am proud of all of you. All hail the Emperor. All hail his Legionnaires!

Tullius utilizes logic to say that the rebellion is over, by combining the rebellion with its leader. He once again utilizes identification in talking about Cyrodiil and the capital of the Empire, the Imperial City. He others the Stormcloaks with his warning, which could also be taken as inclination to succeed, considering the Legion managed to kill the leader of the rebellion. He utilizes identification for Brunwulf, which can be persuasive depending on how the player views his character. He utilizes similitude in his line of doubling the pay and compensation with *your fallen comrades*, but simultaneously also others the legionnaires from him, since he ranks higher in the command structure of the Legion. He defers to the Legionnaires, showing humility and possibly affecting the players view of his ethos. He finishes his speech with the identification points of *emperor and his legionnaires*.

After the speech, Tullius, Rikke and the player have a final conversation. Tullius worries that Ulfric might be taken as a martyr, giving a possible identification point for the players who agree with the Stormcloaks view on religion and Talos. Rikke says that there will be resistance, but with the death of Ulfric, they have nobody to *inflame their passions* saying that they will ultimately return to their homes. This once again utilizes identification, linking Ulfric to the Stormcloaks and then finally utilizing logic that with his death they have no-one to rally around. Tullius defers to Rikke saying that he prays that she is right. He then turns to the player and says that they could not have achieved victory without them and that *the Empire glories in your accomplishments*. Showing deference, with acknowledging the player's part in the Empire's victory, and utilizing identification with deference with the line about glory. After this Tullius and Rikke leave to tend to other matters.

As mentioned at the beginning of section 4.2, I also analyze the comments that the two leaders of the Stormcloak rebellion, Ulfric and Galmar say to the player when they enter Sovngarde to battle Alduin. These comments are important for research question two, since they also show how the player's choices have affected how the two view the end of the civil war and the return of Alduin. Example (37) shows what Ulfric says to the player in Sovngarde.

- (37) Ulfric: Skyrim was betrayed, the blood of her sons spilled in doomed struggle against fate. And so in death, too late, I learn the truth – fed by war, so waxed the power of Alduin, World-Eater – wisdom now useless. By gods' jest in this grim mist together snared, Stormcloak and Imperial, we wander hopeless, waiting for succor.

Ulfric first uses the identification of Skyrim, also calling Skyrim by the feminine third person pronoun again, the only character to use it in the game. He uses the identification of *her sons* and *Alduin*. He calls the situation *gods' jest* using identification and showing similitude to the

two factions *together snared, Stormcloak and Imperial* and *we*. These lines show that he regrets the war, most likely due to finally understanding the gravity of the threat that Alduin possessed for Skyrim.

Galmar is not as pensive as Ulfric about the situation when he sees the Dragonborn in Sovngarde. Example (38) shows this.

- (38) Galmar: Dragonborn, even in death you dog my steps? How come you here? The king of this realm will cast you out – cursed be your name by all sons of Skyrim, with scorn unceasing.

Galmar utilizes identification for the player, calling them by their title *Dragonborn*. He also uses identification by calling on the *king of this realm* referring to *Shor*, the chief of the old Nord pantheon of gods, whose realm Sovngarde is. He others the player by cursing their name in the name of the *sons of Skyrim*, utilizing identification in his line.

#### 4.2.3 Battle of Solitude – Stormcloak side

For the final part of the analysis, I look at the Stormcloak victory, which is achieved through conquest of Skyrim, culminating in the Battle of Solitude. The player joins Ulfric at the gates of Solitude to prepare for their push to the Castle Dour. Like Tullius, Ulfric also gives a speech to his soldiers before the warriors enter the city. Some of his speech is shown in example (39)

- (39) Ulfric: (...) We come to this moment carried by the sacrifices and courage of our fellows. (...). On this day, our enemy will know the fullness of our determination, the true depth of our anger, and the exalted righteousness of our cause. The gods are watching. The spirits of our ancestors are stirring. And men under suns yet to dawn will be transformed by what we do here today. Fear neither pain, nor darkness. For Sovngarde awaits those who die with weapons in their hands, and courage in their hearts. We now fight our way to Castle Dour to cut the head off the legion itself! And in that moment, the gods will look down and see Skyrim as she was meant to be. Full of Nords who are mighty, powerful, and free! Ready now! Everyone, with me! For the sons and daughters of Skyrim!

Like Tullius, Ulfric refers to the sacrifices of his fellow warriors, utilizing inclination to succeed with similitude, since he also says *our fellows*. He others the Legion by calling them *enemy* and uses similitude for his fellow Stormcloaks by using words like *our determination*, *our anger*, *our cause*. He also says that the cause has *exalted righteousness*, which leads him to talk about the gods, which then would utilize a claim of exaltedness, and identification, since he is referring to a particular set of gods. He also claims that their ancestors are watching, using similitude

with the word *our* again. *What we do today* is also utilizing similitude, with a claim of transformation for the future generations of Nords. He uses Sovngarde as a point of identification and uses words like *courage* and *weapons in their hands*, which have a cultural significance for the Nords. He talks about cutting the head off the Legion, and he claims that the gods would see Skyrim *as she was meant to be*, utilizing more identification. He explicitly mentions Nords as a point of identification here, which might cause non-Nord players to feel othered, while Nord players may feel similitude. He ends his speech in the war cry *for the sons and daughters of Skyrim*, possibly reinforcing similitude. Ulfric heavily uses the first-person plural pronoun in his speech, which also reinforces the feeling of similitude.

After fighting their way through the streets of Solitude, Ulfric, Galmar and the player enter Castle Dour, where they confront the defiant Legate Rikke, and the resigned General. Rikke yells for Ulfric to stop and starts trying to convince Ulfric of the necessity of the Empire for combating the Aldmeri Dominion, a very common talking point for the Empire, trying to utilize logic. Galmar repudiates the argument by saying that the Empire died with the treaty that followed the Great War. These arguments affect the player's view of the logos of the two characters, depending on which argument they prefer.

The conversation continues, shown in example (40).

- (40) Galmar: Stand aside woman. We've come for the General.  
 Rikke: He has given up. But I have not.  
 Ulfric: Rikke. Go. You're free to leave.  
 Rikke: I'm also free to stay and fight for what I believe in.  
 Ulfric: You're also free to die for it.  
 Rikke: This is what you wanted? Shield brothers and sisters killing each other? Families torn apart? This is the Skyrim you want!?  
 Galmar: Damn it woman, stand aside!  
 Rikke: That's not the Skyrim I want to live in.  
 Ulfric: Rikke you don't have to do this.  
 Rikke: You left me no choice. Talos preserve us.

Galmar others Rikke, his old war companion, by not using her name and addressing her by her gender. Rikke tries to convince the two that what they are doing is not good for Skyrim, she claims that *shield brothers and sisters* are killing each other, which is true. *Shield brothers and sisters* is a point of identification, since some Nords use the word *Shield-sibling* to refer to their war companions. She claims families are torn apart, which is also true, evident in for example the Riften's Jarl's family where the younger brother is estranged from his family by the merit

of supporting the Imperials. Ulfric's pleas are ineffective as Rikke takes her stand, invoking Talos in her final words, utilizing identification.

After the dialogue of example (40), a fight ensues. Rikke is killed in the fight and Tullius, who joined her side as a last-ditch effort, is defeated. Ulfric asks if Tullius has any last words before he is sent to *Oblivion* utilizing the identification of where some Imperials are thought to end up in their afterlife, although *Aetherius* would be the more likely designation of afterlife for most Imperials, which also indicates othering with identification for the general since *Oblivion* has a negative connotation, while *Aetherius* would have a more positive one. Tullius tries to argue that Ulfric is doing exactly as the Aldmeri Dominion wanted, wasting the Empire's resources on quelling the rebellion. Ulfric says that they are *more than a rebellion*, showing identification, since presumably they are the future governing faction of Skyrim.

The conversation continues, shown in example (41)

- (41) Tullius: We aren't the bad guys you know. [referring to the Aldmeri Dominion]  
 Ulfric: Maybe not, but you certainly aren't the good guys.  
 Tullius: Perhaps you're right. But then what does that make you?  
 Ulfric: You just said it yourself.  
 Galmar: It makes us right.  
 Tullius: And if I surrender?  
 Ulfric: The Empire I remember never surrendered.  
 Galmar: That Empire is dead. And so are you.  
 Tullius: So be it.

Tullius utilizes similitude and logic in his first line in example (41). Ulfric defers to the logic, but also claims that the Empire are not the good guys either. Tullius, like Ulfric, defers to Ulfric's argument. Ulfric and Galmar claim that the Stormcloaks are *right*, utilizing similitude if the player agrees with the two. Tullius asks about surrendering, but no quarter is given for the Imperial general. Tullius defers to the two, agreeing with his death through being identified with the *old Empire*.

Galmar and Ulfric move on and decide to kill Tullius. Galmar suggests that the player should do the killing, since them being the Dragonborn, would make for a better story. The player gets to decide, whether they want to kill Tullius or not. If the player declines, Ulfric kills the general, and says that the three of them will be *immortalized in song*, utilizing a claim with similitude, firmly placing the player with the him and Galmar. Whatever the player chooses, Ulfric asks if the player would like to be included in his speech to the rest of the Stormcloaks. If the player agrees, Ulfric mentions them in his first line to the Stormcloaks, saying that they are known to the Stormcloaks by their rank of *stormblade* in the army and as Dragonborn to the

world, utilizing identification and similitude for the player. If the player declines being included in the speech, then they are not mentioned. Ulfric does ask why the player does not want to be included. The dialogue is shown in example (42)

- (42) Player: Maybe you should leave me out of your speech.  
 Ulfric: Oh, why is that?  
 Player: Many have fought and died. I'm no different than they are. [OR] I'm not sure this was all worth it, after all. [OR] My reasons are my own.

If player chooses the first option, Ulfric disagrees, he says that the player *exceeds the rest* othering them from the rest of the Stormcloaks, this may affect the player's view on Ulfric's ethos. He does defer to the player's wishes though. The second option also leads to Ulfric deferring to the player character's wishes. He also says that there is no shame in having doubt and doubt is a sign of conscience, possibly referring to his regret of having to kill Rikke. He tries to reassure the player's doubts, however, by saying that Skyrim is now free to determine its own future and utilizes a claim with similitude that *every Nord praises us*. The third option also leads to Ulfric deferring to the player but claims that it *casts a bit of gloom* on the occasion.

Ulfric's speech to the Stormcloaks starts with him declaring himself as Ulfric Stormcloak, a possible point of identification. If the player agreed to be mentioned in the speech they are mentioned at this point, as previously stated. He calls his troops heroes in his stead. He talks about the Stormcloaks fighting the Empire, the *puppets of the Thalmor* who tried to bring Skyrim down, othering the Empire and the Thalmor, and utilizing similitude with the possessive form and identification. He talks about the Thalmor trying to take *our god and our heritage* utilizing similitude and identification for the god Talos. He says that the Stormcloaks were the ones who fought *their kin who didn't understand our cause* utilizing similitude and othering, *kin* being a familial word referring to *our cause* and the kin who did not understand it, and it was the price of *our freedom*. He talks about the fight being for Skyrim and its right to determine its own future, utilizing more of the word *our* in his speech, increasing similitude. He then defers to the Moot and its authority and says that he accepts the title of High King only after the Moot decides so. After that, Elisif is made to accept her loyalty to Ulfric *so that the suffering of our people will end*. Utilizing similitude in coercing the widow of the former High King to accept his proposal for peace.

After Elisif accepts, Ulfric says that it is time to rebuild, and turns to Galmar and the player. Like Tullius on the Imperial side, Ulfric concedes that they could not have achieved

victory without the player, and doing so defers to the player. He finishes talking with the player by saying *may the gods preserve us* utilizing identification with similitude.

The final part of this analysis deals with Rikke in Sovngarde and also the comments that the previous High King of Skyrim, Torygg, says in Sovngarde. Torygg appears in Sovngarde either way since he was killed before the start of the game. He aligned with the Imperials, however, and so it is interesting to analyze his comments here with what Rikke says. Rikke's words to the player are shown in example (43)

- (43) Rikke: The bitter war of the world beyond was all for naught. We are all trapped in Alduin's web – for our allegiance he cares not, but devours us equally – doom unescapable. Shor as well – he welcomes all heroes to his kingly hall, if we could but reach it.

Like Ulfric in example (37), Rikke utilizes similitude now for both Stormcloak and Imperial with words like *us* that includes both, even though she does not use those identifications. This can be inferred to be the meaning from her first sentence in example (43). Shor is mentioned here by name, unlike in Galmar's line in example (38), possibly giving a better point of identification for the players.

Finally, Torygg's lines are shown in example (44).

- (44) Torygg: When Ulfric Stormcloak, with savage Shout, sent me here, my sole regret was fair Elisif, left forlorn and weeping. I faced him fearlessly – my fate inescapable, yet my honor is unstained – can Ulfric say the same?

Torygg gives two names as points of identification, Ulfric and Elisif, depending on who the player supports this may affect Torygg's pathos. He also uses the identification *Shout* which refers to the dragon shouts that the Dragonborn, and people trained by the Greybeards can use, such as people like Ulfric. He claims to have faced Ulfric fearlessly and argues that Ulfric's honor may now be stained due to his possible dishonorable use of the Voice.

## 5 Discussion and conclusion

In this study, I set out to answer two questions. In this section I answer those questions based on my analysis, and after that I discuss potential improvements to the research methodology for future research. I also discuss possible avenues for future research.

The first research question concerns how the Aristotelian ethos, pathos and logos appear in linguistic persuasion of the game dialogue. During the analysis I noticed that similitude and othering, concerning ethos, were very common ways for all characters to create group identity. This likely means that we, in our phatic language use, utilize these forms of persuasion somewhat unconsciously. From the point of view of ethos, all persuasive techniques were used at some point in the dialogue present in the analysis. Deference was common, too, and remembering that this persuasive technique is thought to show humility, it can be fairly persuasive even when the player does not necessarily know the context of the dialogue. Example (32) dealing with the dialogue on Karthwasten, where the player does not know what occurred, shows that the player can be deferred to, even when they do not know the context of the event. Expertise and inclination to succeed were rarer and since they are similar ways of increasing someone's ethos, I think they could be bundled together in potential future research. Nevertheless, both persuasive techniques were used, and used in the manner I believed would be used in the first place. Uttering past successes, or talking about knowledge and skills, is an easy way for a person to increase the persuasive character of their ethos.

Identification was a very common persuasive technique from the mode of pathos, extremely so in comparison to the use of metaphors. This also seems very intuitive to me; group identities are a good way to create empathy between the people feeling close to that identity. If a character invokes Talos in their language, the people feeling empathetic to the religious struggle feel the increase in the pathos of that character. Of course, this also means that the players who do not care about the identity feel it unpersuasive and if they have hostility towards that group, which can also appear in the language of the persuader, they might consider the pathos of the persuader worse. Metaphors in the analysis seemed to mirror this idea, the metaphors used in the dialogue were almost always negatively connotated, remember for example the use of *milk drinkers* or *cornered rats*. Metaphors, at least in the context of Skyrim, seem to be mostly used to reduce the pathos for the "enemy", rather than increasing the pathos of the persuader. Positive figure of speech usage can be seen in Tullius' line of *terrible misunderstanding*, where he sidesteps the player's possible past as a criminal, to persuade them of the pathos of the Legion.

For logos, claims, arguments, and justifications were present in the dialogue of analysis. Claims seemed to be used a fair bit in the dialogue of the analysis. Their persuasive strength comes from how the player views the logos of the persuading character and their content. Since the player cannot always know if the content of the claim is sound, they must rely more on the side of logos, on how they view the rationality of the persuader itself. This rationality can of course stem from the language of the persuader, but it can be affected by many things, and as such I believe that it would be extremely useful for future researchers to specifically ask players on how they view the logos, the apparent rationality, of a specific character. The content of what is said is still key to how the audience views the logos of the persuader, and this is especially pronounced in justifications and arguments. If the justification that a persuader gives seems weak, it can affect the player's view of their rationality, and the same is true for argumentation. Argumentation is much easier to analyze in the real world compared to a game world. The player cannot know the nature of *Talos*, for example, since the Elder Scrolls universe is quite tangled in its presentation of history, which makes truth statements harder to grasp, and as such their effects on the persuader's logos are dependent on how much the player perceives the fictional world to be structured.

The second research question dealt with persuasion experienced because of player agency. Player agency, in the context of this study, meaning the choices that the player makes. As shown in the analysis, there are times when the player gets to make a choice that affects the status quo of their game. Consider for example the player's dialogue with Galmar in examples (18) and (19) regarding the Stormcloaks and non-Nords in their ranks. The player can possibly never experience the persuasion that Galmar provides if they choose to play a Nord character. They can also choose to not talk about the topic, and if they do, then they get the full potential context of the persuasion. Player agency, therefore, has a real effect on what kind of persuasion the player experiences, just like it would have in the real world. Another example is seen in how Ulfric or Rikke talk about the war in examples (37) and (43) respectively, the player can be persuaded to think that the civil war is useless, and this persuasion can only be experienced if the player has won the civil war for either side. The player's dialogue lines can be thought of as persuasive, too. The content of the player's lines reflects the possible feelings writers attempted to impose on the player. Consider, for example, the player's lines in example (42), the player is given agency on how their character can react to the game world and as such this can persuade them to feel a certain way, depending on the dialogue choice that fits their feelings, and if the player feels immersed enough.

The methodology for the study was based on Higgins' and Walker's previous work, adapted to better fit a game study. In the following paragraphs I discuss possible improvements to the methodology, starting with ethos, then discussing pathos, and finally discussing logos. Since the original methodology of Higgins and Walker dealt with societal and environmental reports, the weakness of the original, and to an extent the methodology adapted to this study, surfaces in a dialogue, where the persuading sides also try to undermine their opponent's ethos, pathos, and logos. I propose that the answer to this weakness could be found in potential additions to persuasive techniques.

For similitude, I added othering, which not only was present in the analysis, but showed attitudes that the persuaders had for the player character and their respective opposing factions. The prominence of othering as a persuasive technique shows that there is much opponent-undermining language at play in dialogue of persuasion. I would propose the combination of inclination to succeed and expertise together, since they are quite similar in what they reveal of the persuader's ethos, their apparent ability. The negative counterpart for these could be *inclination to fail and lack of expertise*, consider for example Tullius' line *you can't escape from me this time* in example (34), which would show Ulfric's inclination to fail. Deference could be opposed by *contempt*, where the persuader either does not value the feelings of the audience or attempts to persuade the audience of the opposing side not valuing their output. Example (28) has Tullius utilizing contempt by not letting Elisif handle a part of the negotiation. Finally, self-criticism could be opposed by *arrogance*, where the audience either feels the persuader to not be critical of their own position, or the opposing side points out the failings of the other side. These improvements would represent the mode of ethos better in a dialogue-oriented analysis of the language of persuasion.

Identification and metaphors constituted the mode of pathos in the analysis. The analysis of identification could include the analysis of collocates with the word carrying the identification, consider for example the phrase *those Imperial scum*, the identifying word of *Imperial* is collocated with *those*, a word used for othering, and *scum*, a noun in this case, with a negative connotation, revealing attitudes that the persuader holds for the identified group. These collocates show attitudes that the persuader has towards that identified group, and as such its importance for the mode of pathos is unquestionable. Metaphors could be expanded with the addition of other figures of speech, such as irony, sarcasm. These figures of speech have either a positive or a negative context. This context shows the feelings that the persuader has towards the thing they are speaking of, and as such it affects the audience's feeling of the persuader's pathos. I tried to do some of this in my analysis, especially with identification, but explicitly

intending to do so even before the analysis, could have revealed more on the effects of negative identifications or figures of speech on the pathos of the persuader. The importance of connotational analysis for pathos was proposed by Halmari and Virtanen (2005, 5-6), and these additions to the analysis of pathos would help in further understanding pathos as a persuasive tool in language use.

Claims, justifications and logic or argumentation should also have their counterparts. Claims could be opposed by *disclaimers*, words, phrases, or sentences that reveal possible caveats to the claim, and possibly increase the perception of the persuader's *logos* in the audience. For justification, my proposal is *weakening justification*. This could instantiate itself in the persuader attempting to follow their opponent's justification with an explanation on why it does not work. Logic and argumentation should be opposed by *contradiction*. If an argument has a logical contradiction, it is, by definition, not a rational argument. Contradictions would then negatively affect the perceived *logos* of the persuader. The opponent of the persuader could also point out the contradictions in their opponent's language, possibly undermining their *logos*.

With the methodology being supplemented by these persuasive techniques that attempt to undermine the audience's perception of the modes of persuasion in their opponent, it is a more robust framework for studying persuasive language. Future research with these modifications should focus on shorter dialogue, however, since analysis of the persuasive techniques would need to take more into account. In addition, it would be extremely beneficial for researchers to survey audiences of games on the topic of persuasiveness. I believe surveying audiences could reveal sociolinguistic differences in the effectiveness of persuasion, and it could also show how people subconsciously agree with different modes of persuasion more than others.

Game studies proves an interesting field for linguists to research. With more people playing games and experiencing their stories, more people are influenced by persuasion present in games. As shown in this study, video game dialogue has the potential to be extremely full of persuasive techniques aimed at the audiences that enjoy games. Understanding language used in persuasion, whether fictional or not, should give valuable insight into our understanding of persuasion as a linguistic phenomenon.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Finnish summary

### 1 Johdanto

11. päivä marraskuuta 2011 Bethesda game studios julkaisi pelinsä Elder Scrolls V: Skyrimin. Skyrim on ollut pelaajien mielessä monesta syystä, mutta yksi keskeisimmistä on pelissä esitettävän sisällissotaan liittyvien argumenttien puhuttelevuus. Sisällissodan kahtena osapuolena toimivat Cyrodiilin provinssin Imperiumi ja Skyrimissa vaikuttavat kapinalliset, joita kutsutaan nimellä Stormcloaks. Peleissä toimivan kielenkäytön tutkiminen on tullut tärkeämmäksi pelialan kehittyessä. Pelejä pelataan nykyään myös huomattavasti enemmän, mikä vaikuttaa peleissä tapahtuvan suostuttelun tutkimuksen tärkeyteen.

Retoriikan keskeisimpänä keinona suostuttelu (engl. persuasion) on tärkeä aihe tutkia myös kielitieteellisissä tutkimuksissa. Tämän tutkielman aiheena on suostuttelun tutkiminen ilmiönä perustuen Aristoteleen kolmeen henkilöön liittyvään suostuttelun muotoon. Nämä muodot tunnetaan yleisesti nimillä ethos, pathos ja logos. Suostuttelun muodot esitellään tarkemmin tutkielman osiossa 2.

Tutkimuskysymykset ovat:

1. Miten Aristoteleen suostuttelun muodot ethos, pathos ja logos esiintyvät kielitieteellisesti pelin henkilöhahmojen puheen suostutteluna?
2. Miten pelaajan omat valinnat vaikuttavat suostuttelun luonteeseen?

Hypoteesina ensimmäiseen kysymykseen esitän suostuttelun kaikkien muotojen osallistumista suostuttelun kokonaisuuteen. Lisäksi hahmolla itsellään voi olla suuri vaikutus siihen, millaista suostuttelua tarjotaan pelaajille, eli siis pelin suostuttelun yleisölle. Pelaajan omien valintojen vaikutuksen esitän suurimmalta osin pelaajan tukemien suostuttelijoiden vahventavan omia piirteitä, mutta valinnat voivat myös tarjota erilaista suostuttelun tyyliä ja lisää kontekstia suostutteluun.

## 2 Teoriatausta

Teoriataustana tässä tutkimuksessa toimi suostuttelun käsittely ensin kielitieteelliseltä näkökannalta, sen jälkeen tarkemmin Aristoteleen retoriikkaan perehtyen. Viimeisenä teoriataustassa käsitellään suostuttelua pelien tutkimuksessa.

Suostuttelun määritelmänä esitän tässä tutkielmassa seuraavan perustuen Halmarin ja Virtasen (2005) näkemykseen suostuttelusta: Suostuttelu on kielenkäyttöä, joka pyrkii muuttamaan tai vahvistamaan suostuttelijan kantaa, riippuen suostuteltavan yleisön valmiista mielipiteistä suostuteltavaan asiaan. Yleisesti hyväksytyt paradigma kielitieteissä on kielellä tehtävien tekojen olevan myös kielitieteen tutkimuksen piireissä olevaa tutkimuskohdetta. On kuitenkin olemassa kielitieteilijöitä, jotka eivät hyväksy diskurssintutkinnan osa-alueita kielitieteellisenä ilmiönä (Lakoff 2001, 199-200). Argumentoisin kuitenkin, että kielenkäyttö on tärkeää kielitieteissä, koska kielenkäyttö yksilöillä on tavoitehakuista. Haluamme saada tiettyjä vaikutuksia aikaan kielenkäytöllämme ympäristöömme, ja juuri siksi on tärkeää, että kielitieteilijät tutkivat myös ilmiöitä, jotka keskittyvät diskurssiin. Suostuttelu kielitieteissä on voitu jakaa tietynlaiseen jatkumoon, jonka Östman (2005) jakaa arkipäivän kielestä propagandaan. Suostutteluun voidaan myös ottaa mukaan pakottaminen (engl. coercion). Millerin (2013, 71) mukaan pakottaminen keskittyy yleensä ei-verbaalisiin tapoihin, kuten aseisiin tai taloudelliseen epäjärjestykseen. Kielitieteissä suostuttelu ilmiönä lasketaan diskurssintutkinnan piiriin, koska suurena osana suostuttelua on vallan käyttö kielessä (Van Dijk 2001, 355). Fiktionaalisen kielen tutkimiseen soveltuvat kielitieteellisen tutkimuksen metodit (Brownen 2015, 170), joten genrenä pelien tutkiminen soveltuu myös kielitieteen piiriin.

Aristoteleen retoriikan perusteena toimivat suostuttelun muodot ethos, pathos ja logos. Termit ovat yleisessä käytössä tieteen kielessä, vaikka Aristoteles ei niitä itse käyttänyt. Aristoteleen mukaan ethoksen käsittelyyn liittyvät puhujan henkilökohtaiseen olemukseen liittyvät piirteet (Aristoteles 2012, 4). Käytännössä siihen liittyy kielenkäytön tavat, joilla yleisöön saadaan uskomusta suostuttelijan luotettavuudesta ja integriteetistä. Pathokseen liittyy puhe, joka vaikuttaa yleisön tunteeseen. Käytännössä se tarkoittaa sitä, että suostuttelija pyrkii vaikuttamaan yleisön tunteisiin omalla kielenkäytöllään. Logoksen Aristoteles esittää tarkoittavan puhujan puheen sisällön rationaalisuutta, tai ainakin sen oletettavaa rationaalisuutta. Näihin kolmeen suostuttelun muotoon on tarjonnut teoreettista viitekehystä

Higgins ja Walker. Higginsin ja Walkerin viitekehys oli pohjana myös tämän tutkimuksen metodologiassa. Ludologian eli pelitutkimuksen, piirissä on tavallista, että tutkijat muokkaavat viitekehyyksiä oman tutkimuksensa tarkoituksiperiin sopivaksi (Mäyrä 2008, 156). Tämän tutkimuksen viitekehukseen tehtyjä muutoksia esitellään tarkemmin osiossa kolme.

Pelitutkimuksessa suostuttelu on tutkittu ilmiö. Pelitutkimus on monitieteinen tiede, joten siihen sisältyy luonnollisesti muitakin tieteenaloja, kuin kielitieteellistä tutkimusta. Suuren panoksen suostuttelun tutkimukseen yhteiskuntatieteissä on antanut Bogost, joka on lähinnä argumentoinut pelien suostuttelun tutkimista pelitapojen ja -sisällön perusteella. Kielitiedettä on kuitenkin aiemmin yritetty myös yhdistää pelitutkimuksiin esimerkiksi Punormon ja Khristianton toimesta (2019). Punormo ja Khristianto yhdistivät kielitieteen ja ludologian omalla viitekehysellään, joka tutki pelin antamien opasteiden vaikutusta ideologioiden suostuttelevuuteen (Punormo ja Khristianto, 2019). Opasteiden tutkinta ei kuitenkaan ollut tämän tutkimuksen tarkoituksena. Pelit genrenä ovat monipuolisia, ja Skyrim lasketaan toiminta/roolipeliksi. Lisäksi pelaajilla on monia mahdollisia erilaisia taustoja liittyen heidän ikäänsä, sukupuoleensa, ja muihin henkilökohtaisiin piirteisiin. Yksittäistä yleisöä suostuttelulle ei siis ole, mutta tiettyjen piirteiden relevanttiutta mietitään myös tässä tutkimuksessa.

### **3 Materiaalit ja Metodit**

Materiaalina tutkimuksessa toimi 6 erilaista kohtausta pelissä. Nämä olivat (1) pelin aloituskohtausta, jossa esitellään Skyrimin sisällissodan osapuolet. (2) ja (3) Liittyminen Imperiumin joukkoihin ja liittyminen kapinallisen joukkoihin vastaavassa järjestyksessä. (4) Väliaikaisen rauhan neuvottelu osapuolten välille. Lopuksi kohtaukset (5) ja (6), joissa pelaaja valtaa joko imperiumin tai kapinallisten pääkaupungin, riippuen valitsemastaan puolesta sisällissodassa. Materiaali on videomuodossa tutkielman laatijan kuvaamana. Materiaalin tekijänoikeudet kuuluvat pelintekijälle Bethesda game studiosille, julkaisijalle Bethesda Softworksille, ja sen emoyhtiölle ZeniMax Medialle.

Metodologian perusteena toimii aiemmin mainittu Higginsin ja Walkerin viitekehys, joka on muokattu sopivammaksi pelin ja varsinkin dialogin tutkimiselle. Higginsin ja Walkerin alkuperäisen tutkimuksen kohteena olivat yhteiskunnalliset ja ympäristöraportit, joten viitekehys oli sovellettava pelissä käytettävän kielen muotoon.

Higgins ja Walker (2012) osoittivat kielestä havaittavia suostuttelun tekniikkoja liittyen ethokseen seuraavina keinoina: samaistuvuus (similitude), johon itse lisäsin vastapainoksi vieraannuttamisen (othering), kunnioitus (deference), osaaminen (expertise), itsekritiikki (self-criticism), onnistumisen mahdollisuus (inclination to succeed), ja johdonmukaisuus (constistency). Samaistuvuus näkyy kielenkäytössä, joka edistää suostuttelijan olevan lähestyttävissä olevuutta, kuten pronomineilla *we*, siinä missä vieraannuttaminen käyttää esimerkiksi pronomina *you*. Kunnioitus näkyy siinä, että suostuttelija arvostaa yleisön mielipiteitä. Tämä näkyy kielessä, jos on havaittavissa kysymyksiä yleisön mielipiteistä tai tunteiden kunnioittamisesta. Osaaminen ja onnistumisen mahdollisuus ovat hyvin samanlaisia, mutta tässä tutkimuksessa ne tulkittiin eri suostuttelun tekniikkoina. Osaamiseen liittyvät väitteet mahdollisesta taidosta tai osaamisesta, ja onnistumisen mahdollisuuteen liitetään viittaukset menneisyyden tekoihin, jotka osoittavat mahdollisuuden onnistumiseen tulevaisuudessa. Itsekritiikin tarkoituksena on osoittaa suostuttelijan nöyryyttä. Johdonmukaisuutta ei tutkittu tässä tutkimuksessa, sillä kaikkia suostuttelijan mahdollisia sanoja ei pystytty tutkielman puitteissa sisällyttämään tutkimuksen aineistoon.

Pathoksen piiriin kuuluivat identifikaatio (identification) ja metaforat (metaphors). Identifikaatioon tässä tutkimuksessa kuuluvat alkuperäisen kulttuuristen identifikaatioiden lisäksi myös muunlaiset identifikaatiot, kuten ammatillinen, ja muhin henkilöihin perustuva identifikaatio. Identifikaatiossa määritellään joku henkilö osaksi jotain isompaa ryhmää, ja ryhmään kuuluvuutta pidetään mahdollisena suostutteluna tunteiden kautta. Metaforat olivat toinen osa kielenkäyttöä, jota pidetään osana pathosta. Metaforat voivat olla positiivisia tai negatiivisia, ja ne vaikuttavat yleisöön samalla tavalla. Kollokaatio, eli sanat jotka yhdessä vaikuttavat kokonaisuuteen lausekkeiden tai lauseen muodossa, olivat tärkeä osa sekä identifikaation että metaforan analyysia.

Rationaalisuuden osoittamisen Higgins ja Walker (2012) jakoivat seuraaviin piirteisiin: argumentaatio, logiikka, perustelut (warrants/justification), väitteet (claims) ja data/todistusaineisto(data/evidence). Argumentaatio ja logiikka on yhdistetty tässä tutkimuksessa kieleen, joka käyttää rakennetta *x siis y*. Perustelut ovat hahmojen antamia perusteita omille uskomuksilleen. Väitteet ovat hahmon antamia lausuntoja jonkun asian tilasta. Datan ja todistusaineiston tutkimusta ei tässä tutkimuksessa analysoitu, sillä aineisto ei sisällä kaikkea mahdollista henkilöahmojen puhetta, joten kokonaisvaltaista kuvaa todistusaineistosta ei voitu saada aineiston perusteella.

Metodologian mukaan tutkimus eteni seuraavasti: tutkijana, seurasin kielenkäyttöä, jota pelin hahmot esittivät pelaajalle, eli yleisölle. Kieli analyysissä sijoitettiin yhteen tai useampaan suostuttelun tekniikan piiriin. Analyysi sisältää myös mahdollisia tulkintoja kielenkäytön valinnoista.

## 4 Analyysi

Ensimmäisessä analysoitavassa kohtauksessa keskeisessä osassa oli sisällissodan osapuolten esittely. Hahmot käyttivät monipuolisesti varsinkin samaistuvuuteen ja vieraannuttamiseen liittyviä kielenkäytön keinoja. Pelin ensimmäisenä kohtauksena henkilöhahmojen kielessä oli paljon identifikaation suostuttelun tekniikoita kuten *thief*, *prisoner*, *Talos (Jumala universumissa)*. Identifikaatio oli hyvin usein yhteydessä joko samaistuvuuteen tai vieraannuttamiseen. Esimerkkinä voisi osoittaa lausekkeen *that thief over there*. Logokseen liittyviä suostuttelun keinoja ei ollut huomattavan paljon, mutta niitä kuitenkin esiintyi myös ensimmäisessä kohtauksessa, esimerkiksi kenraali Tulliuksen puheessa Jaarli Ulfricille. Ensimmäisessä kohtauksessa pelaajan omat valinnat eivät huomattavasti vaikuttaneet suostuttelun laatuun, mutta esimerkiksi pelaajan hahmon taustan mukaan dialogin luonne muuttui. Esimerkiksi pelaaja, joka valitsi haltijan pelattavaksi saattaa kokea kielessä vieraannuttamista, siinä missä Nordin hahmoksi valitseva pelaaja saattaa huomata samaistuvuutta.

Toinen ja kolmas analysoitavista kohtauksista liittyi Imperiumin legioonaan liittymiseen tai kapinallisten joukkoon liittymiseen. Molemmissa kohtauksissa tarjottiin monipuolisesti kaikkia keinoja. Lisäksi pelaajalla oli huomattavasti enemmän mahdollisuuksia vaikuttaa suostuttelun laatuun, koska nämä kohtaukset sisälsivät myös pelaajan hahmon omia dialogin valintoja. Pelaaja saattoi esimerkiksi kieltäytyä vannomasta valaa sodan osapuolelle, joka osoitti Imperiumin puolella rationaalisuuteen liittyviä argumentteja ja kapinallisten puolella taas identifikaatiota ja myös vieraannuttamista. Lisäksi osapuolten johtajat pyrkivät vaikuttamaan identifikaation keinoilla, jotka tässä vaiheessa toimivat ehkä vähän paremmin, koska pelaajalla oli enemmän taustatietoa tietyistä identifikaatioon liittyvistä termeistä, kuten mahdollisten jumalten nimistä.

Neljäs analyysin kohde oli väliaikaisen rauhan neuvottelu. Tässä kohtauksessa pelaajalla oli suuri vaikutus siihen, miten neuvottelut etenivät. Jälleen jokaista Aristoteleen suostuttelun muotoa käytettiin, ja pelaajan valinnat dialogissa ja neuvottelun ehdoissa vaikuttivat suostuttelun luonteeseen. Esimerkiksi pelaaja pystyi puoltamaan erilaisissa

neuvottelun ehdoissa toista osapuolta, joka toi suostutteluun lisää huomioitavaa. Kiinnostavasti esimerkiksi dialogissa kapinallisten puoltaminen saattoi johtaa kunnioitukseen Imperiumin kenraalin Tulliuksen osalta, koska tämä näennäisesti ymmärsi pelaajan hahmon tavoitteet. Identifikaatio oli suuressa roolissa samaistuvuuden ja vieraannuttamisen kanssa, ja pelaajan omat valinnat osoittivat huomattavasti suostuttelun luonteen muuttumista.

Viidentenä ja kuudentena analyysin kohteena olivat sisällissodan päättävät kohtaukset molempien sodan osapuolten kannalta. Identifikaatio oli erittäin vahvasti esillä kapinallisten puolella, jossa Ulfric Stormcloak suostutteli monella eri identifikaatiolla puheensa yleisöä, joka sisältää pelaajan. Imperiumin puolella identifikaatio ei ollut niin vahvasti esillä kuin kapinallisten puolella, mutta silti huomattavassa käytössä. Metaforat, jotka olivat harvinaisia suostuttelun taktiikoita, esiintyi tässä kohtauksessa esimerkiksi Imperiumin puolella, jossa Tullius kutsui kapinallisia *nurkkaan ahdistetuiksi rotiksi* (engl. *cornered rats*). Kapinallisten puolella pelaajalla oli enemmän mahdollisuuksia vaikuttaa siihen, miten hänen hahmonsa esitellään dialogissa ja oman hahmonsa motivaatioihin. Tämä tavallaan antoi lisää kunnioitusta pelaajalle mahdollisuuksien muodossa, mikä saattoi vaikuttaa pelaajan ja pelihahmon suostutteluun.

## 5 Lopuksi

Kaikkia Aristoteleen suostuttelun muotoja, joita tässä analyysissä lähdettiin tutkimaan, löytyi pelin henkilöhahmojen kielestä. Tämä viittaa siihen, että fiktiivisen kielen kirjoittajilla on ainakin jonkinlainen alitajuntainen käsitys siitä, miten kirjoitetaan suostutteluun kykeneviä hahmoja. Esitän, että tutkimukset jatkossa käyttäisivät kyselyitä pelaajille, jotta voitaisiin huomata käytännössä vaikuttaako kielenkäyttö siihen, miten pelaajat arvioivat ethoksen, pathoksen ja logoksen kautta erilaisia hahmoja.

Metodologia toimi osittain hyvin paljastamaan suostuttelun sisältävää kieltä, mutta siinä oli mahdollisia heikkouksia. Esitän tässä kappaleessa muutoksia metodologiaan mahdolliseen tutkimukseen tulevaisuudessa. Samaistuvuuden ja vieraannuttamisen käyttö toimi hyvin, joten esitän että näiden lisäksi voitaisiin antaa jokaiselle suostuttelun taktiikalle ns. vastapuoli. Kunnioittamisen vastapuoleksi asetettaisiin ylenkatse (engl. *contempt*), jonka tarkoituksena on osoittaa kieltä, joka ei kunnioita yleisön tunteita. Osaaminen ja onnistumisen mahdollisuus on parempi yhdistää, koska ne osoittavat erittäin samaa piirrettä suostuttelijassa. Niiden vastapainoksi esitän epäonnistumisen mahdollisuutta. Itsekritiikin vastapainoksi taas esitän ylimielisyyttä (engl. *arrogance*). Pathoksen puolella on tärkeää, että kollokaation merkitystä

korostetaan, ja että identifikaatio ja metaforat saavat positiivisen ja negatiivisen kontekstin analyysin. Metaforat voitaisiin muuttaa kielikuviksi, jotka sisältäisivät esimerkiksi ironian ja sarkasmin käsitteet. Näihin vaikuttaa myös yleisön mielipide identifikaatiosta, joten se on myös hyvä ottaa mukaan mahdollisissa kyselyissä. Logokseen taas voitaisiin ottaa mukaan vastapainoja. Väitteiden vastapainoksi voidaan ottaa vastaväitteitä (engl. disclaimers), perusteluun perustelun heikentäminen (engl. weakening justification), ja argumentaation ja logiikan vastapainoksi ristiriidat (engl. contradiction). Näillä lisäkeinoilla voidaan paremmin tutkia rationaalisuutta dialogissa.

Metodologian muutokset voivat vaikuttaa siihen, että on parempi ehkä tutkia lyhyempiä dialoogeja, tai keskittyä vain yhteen Aristoteleen suostuttelun muodoista. Tärkeänä tuleville tutkimuksille on myös se, että mahdollisen yleisön mielipiteitä hahmojen eri suostuttelun muodoista kysellään. Peleihin keskittyvät tutkimukset kielitieteissä ovat hyvin tärkeitä, koska suostuttelun kaltaisia ilmiöitä löytyy myös fiktiivisestä kielestä.