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**VYUŽITÍ VIDEOHER KE ZLEPŠENÍ KULTURNÍ
INTELIGENCE**

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**USING VIDEO GAMES TO IMPROVE
CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE**

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V Plzni,

.....
Tomáš Baloun

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ABSTRACT

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The object of this undergraduate thesis is video games and their benefits for players in intercultural interactions. The goal of this thesis is to explore and clarify ways in which video games improve the cultural intelligence of players, mainly because the general public perceives games quite negatively. The thesis is divided into three main parts. The first part analyses the relationship between culture, cultural intelligence and video games and finds similarities between CQ practice and game strategy, which is crucial for both succeeding in the game and also being efficient in intercultural interactions. The second part revolves primarily around gaming avatars and their importance for the game environment with an emphasis on the relationship between players and their avatar. Furthermore, the exploration of three video games and their benefits for the players is present as well as experiences of players with a different approach to games. The final part deals with the future of gaming and avatars in three areas and shows that games have a lot more in them than it is expected.

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INTRODUCTION

Playing games is vital for survival. People play games for fun or competitively. They can play them alone or in a group. There is a wide range of games, ranging from balls and sticks to card games and, most recently-video games. At first, we played simple games with simple tools and easily understood principles. Throughout human history, games have inhabited a vital role in our evolution as they provided a much-needed leisure and were a source of fun even in hard times, for instance. They encouraged people to socialize, work in teams, and taught them how to be competitive and ambitious. Understandably, socializing with new cultures was much more difficult before the advent of the internet. By the twentieth century, globalized sports happened infrequently, say every four years for the World Cup or the Olympics. Indeed, the invention and distribution of the internet made it considerably more comfortable for people to socialize and work cross-culturally. This trend has transitioned to video games too. Thus, players have a chance to interact with each other no matter their location or mother language.

Chad Hadzinsky, in his Senior Thesis entitled a *Look into the Industry of Video Games Past, Present, and Yet to Come* states that the process of digitalization of games has endless possibilities. Anything that one can imagine can become a reality in the world of games. The laws of our physical world can be changed or replaced with new ones to create experiences that could never before exist. To be sunken into the new worlds means to open up new perspectives as to the nature of reality.

According to Isabela Granic, Adam Lobel & Rutger C. M. E. Engels and their article entitled, “The Benefits of Playing Video Games”, the essential feature which distinguishes video games from other media, such a book, television, or movies is that they are always interactive; players do not have to surrender to a game’s storyline passively. In other words, video games are specifically designed for players to engage with their systems and for these systems to react to players’ agentive behaviours.

Anyhow, the kinds of leisure have multiplied unbelievably ever since the internet started to spread very fast. It has all started with simple games that were played on arcade machines, which were quite similar to contemporary computers and consoles. When social sites and multiplayer games began to find a way in people’s lives, it was only a matter of time before people started to take full advantage of them and use them frequently. Just for comparison, in the late 1980s, there were small communities of eager and passionate gamers

who had a dream to play games and maybe earn some money. However, the gaming world was still a few decades from what it represents now.

Today there are millions of gamers of all ages from different social classes, races, and religions that interact with players, both inside and outside the game, that reside halfway around the world. What connects all these different people in the game environment? These connections are made possible through an avatar, a fictional game character who symbolizes a given player.

Gaming has slowly transitioned from a leisure activity to a major part of its cultural growth. Gaming communities started with friends playing in cellars. They grew to highly professional teams of athletes with a group of specialists of various sorts surrounding them and analysing their effort. The relationship between video games and professional sports is quite close. Both require a strong sense of discipline, stamina and self-sacrifice to succeed. Besides, both esports games and professional sports events are broadcasted on television with millions of spectators watching them and are on the brink of being considered a professional sports field. Also, the most prolific players are set as role-models, not only for young gamers but also for regular athletes. This fact means that while professional sportspeople are set as examples for young children because of how hardworking, disciplined, and even successful they are, the most successful gamers are starting to be set as role-models too.

Over the past decade, many new sponsors and big companies in the technology industry have started to pay close attention to the gaming world. This close observation has resulted in numerous investments in esports teams. Sponsors come from different fields and industries, but they all see gaming as a product of tomorrow. When taking a closer look at some of the sponsors, we find namely Red Bull, which initially invested in football clubs, such as Leipzig or Salzburg. However, their scope has shifted considerably, as they now support numerous significant esports events. The sponsorship mainly includes a supply of energy drinks and coverage of the events on the official website of Red Bull. Another significant company that is actively involved in the success of esports tournaments is Intel. A technology company that mainly focuses on the evolution of computers, computer chips and data centres, takes care of gaming tournaments by providing electronic equipment to players or tournament organizers might. When looking at some crucial data, A. J. Willingham from media giant CNN reports in an article “What is eSports? a Look at an Explosive Billion-Dollar Industry” from the August 27th, 2018 that tournaments and

competitions can rival most traditional professional sports events in terms of viewership and largeness of the structure. Willingham (2018) states that The 2017 League of Legends World Championship was observed by 80 million viewers, which immediately made it one of the most popular esports competitions ever. He also predicts that approximately 1.6 billion people would know of esports by the end of 2018.

Video games are closely tied to cultural intelligence and intelligence in general. To be successful in games as in real life, one has to have discipline, obey rules, and follow principles. A broad public perceives intelligence as a set of knowledge and an ability to think and deal with matters more efficiently. A more in-depth explanation of intelligence originates in a website called “BrainMatrix”, which focuses on training the brain using games that require a lot of focus and problem-solving:

Intelligence is defined as general cognitive problem-solving skills. A mental ability involved in reasoning, perceiving relationships and analogies, calculating, learning quickly...etc. Earlier it was believed that there was one underlying general factor at the intelligence base, but later psychologists maintained that it is more complicated and could not be determined by such a simplistic method. (BrainMatrix, n.d.)

Cultural intelligence deliberately teaches us how to solve problems in foreign cultures or work together in multicultural cooperation. Cultural intelligence shows us how to be more efficient in communication and how to interact appropriately depending on what culture we choose to inhabit.

DotA2 is possibly the most popular multiplayer game in the video game industry. It has probably evolved the most of any game since its beginnings. The positive effort of the game developers helped the community to grow and to educate players and spectators alike. Fans that do not necessarily play games are also crucial to gaming culture. The difference between watching and playing the game is tenuous because one can improve himself in various areas simply by watching and observing. After all, playing games does not put a high demand on the physical skills of the players, unlike regular sports. DotA2 is a MOBA based game of two teams competing to win. MOBA is an acronym for Multiplayer Online Battle Arena, a type of game where numerous players fight in an arena. The principle is to destroy an enemy base utilizing various heroes and their abilities. Each hero has talents, skills, pros, and cons and interacts with multiple other heroes. Each team consists

of 5 players, from which everyone chooses their hero. The effort to nullify or decrease enemy heroes' abilities is commonplace. Otherwise, the game is very strategy-based, and success or failure depends on choosing the right strategy and great team play. Fast and effective communication is also key to success. Each player has a different role in the group. The most important is the captain, a so-called "in-game leader", who is in charge of team decisions, and the game plan based on his team's hero selection. Other roles vary, but they are all very reliant on each other. The positive outcome once again depends on the team play, the ability to communicate effectively, to obey the rules, and understand the importance of the team over the sole individual. Besides, as the game is available worldwide, players from different cultures with different native languages act as a team and get to know each other quite well. They all learn how to respect each other and take advantage of the other's qualities. In all, the games are just a helpful device to develop skills for real-life teamwork. Team-based games can utilize many cultures, races, and even religions within one team. These players frequently have different mother tongues, but they all communicate in and outside of the game in English. There are few exceptions, for instance, if the players are from Nordic countries. Also, games help players to mature, take responsibility, be a nice person, and understand the cultures in general and also how to treat them in order to prevent miscommunication or misunderstanding.

I have played computer games ever since I was a young boy. I started with simple browser games, and I have continuously shifted my focus towards more complex games that require constant effort and much practice. As I have been a member of the gaming community for more than four years, I have a piece of advanced knowledge about the gaming world, the players, the games, and competitions. My perspective is that in this modern world, where games are highly analysed, the impact of the games also has to be clarified and explained.

Therefore, this thesis aims to clarify and explain specific ways in which video games improve the cultural intelligence of gamers. Furthermore, the aim is on explaining the close relationship between gaming and culture and how one can benefit in the real-world by learning the principles of video games and applying knowledge from games to everyday interactions. The side task of this thesis is to explain how video games can benefit society in the future and highlight how the commencement of the esports industry allowed the society to have intercultural interactions almost on an Olympic Games level, not every four or two years but 24 hours a day.

1. CONTEXT OF GAMES, CULTURE AND CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE

1.1. CULTURE, ITS PRINCIPLES AND IMPORTANCE

Culture itself is a precise term. However, it is sometimes challenging to assess such a term and give it a sufficient explanation that would give the credit it deserves. David Livermore, who is one of the foremost experts on cultural intelligence, offers in his top-rated book named *Customs of the world: Using Cultural Intelligence to Adapt, Wherever You Are* his take on what is culture: “In order for something to be a culture, it has to be more than just a group of people; there has to be some set of organizing values and assumptions that thread members of a culture together” (Livermore, 2013, p. 5).

Brooks Peterson states in his publication called *Cultural Intelligence: a guide to working with people from other cultures* that the problem with literal dictionary definitions of culture is that they may not give a concrete meaning of the term culture or anything usable for professionals. Brooks Peterson is the founder of “Across Cultures”, a company which provides professionals with cross-cultural materials needed for better interaction. He is also an experienced cross-cultural trainer, researcher, consultant, and graduate-level educator. In his view, the primary dictionaries give us only a brief description of the culture, one that is elementary and hardly useful for future reference. As culture is a vast topic, it is not very efficient to reduce the definition to one sentence. However, before we try to assess what a term culture means, we need to distinguish between high culture and general culture. A website “Boundless.com”, which provides high-quality content for teaching needs, sheds light on the matter: “High culture most commonly refers to the set of cultural products, mainly in the arts, held in the highest esteem by a culture...Low culture is thought to encompass such things as gossip magazines, reality television, popular music, yellow journalism, escapist fiction, and camp” (Boundless, n.d.).

Based on the statement above, we can agree on the fact that our main focus will be on low culture and its values and principles. Brooks Peterson gives us a suitable definition of culture: “Culture is relatively stable set of inner values and beliefs held by a group of people in countries, regions and the noticeable impact of those values and beliefs have on the peoples’ outward behaviour and environment” (Peterson, 2004, p. 17). Strictly speaking, culture spreads in everyone’s lives and directly enhances their knowledge about other cultures and to respect them. This situation enriches one’s cultural intelligence, which, as it is explained further in the text, has a significant influence on how we perceive other

cultures and how we treat them. Peterson's explanation displayed above is followed by another significant one by the same scholar, this time speaking directly about making the abstract term culture suitable for real-life settings: "In order to define the culture in a way relevant to yourself, to your company or organization, and to your own work and life situations I recommend you pick and choose few elements from the 'dictionary definitions',...from your own experience and insights, then come up with your with you own definition" (Peterson, 2004, p. 17). David Livermore mentioned above is also concerned with cultural intelligence. On the issue of defining culture, he states that, on the one hand, the term culture is very familiar, and everyone thinks he knows how to describe it: "Culture is simply the way we've been socialized to think and behave in the world" (Livermore, 2013, p. 4).

Another vital point of discussion as far as culture is concerned is "Why do we need it?" or "What is it useful for?". Livermore provides us with a great example of one of the common uses of culture by explaining that:

If you've been brought up all your life that the polite way to introduce yourself is to stand up straight, look the other person in the eye, give them a firm handshake, and ask them a few friendly questions, then when you meet people who don't introduce themselves that way, you might quickly assume that they're socially awkward or that they don't feel comfortable talking to you. (Livermore, 2013, p. 5)

This thought process, however, might not always be correct as stereotypes often take part in our thinking process and might lead us into a wrong assessment of the personality of the person we are talking to has. I take a more in-depth look at stereotypes later in this chapter.

What people often tend to think about culture is that one can see its impact everywhere around us, yet it is something mysterious and invisible. This, however, is not the case, as David Livermore explains further: "The culture that most strongly shapes our thinking and behaviour is our national culture—that is, whether we're from the United States, Japan, or Germany" (Livermore, 2013, p. 4). It supports the preceding statement, while culture might be the art or music; it also involves other areas such as human behaviour, traditions, or unwritten rules, as explained above.

Peterson (2004) also introduces the phenomenon of national culture groups, stating that they tend to have a set of shared values. Though there are numerous exceptions, we can still make reasonably accurate statements about the values of a particular culture.

Objectively, this clarifies the claims, which state that cultures are very different from each other, but they share many similarities. This situation mostly tends to happen with countries geographically close to each other. Besides, the culture does not evolve only in countries but also in groups within one country. Peterson (2004) also claims that many Asian cultures tend to generally value formality, respect, and position, while English speaking cultures, such as Brits, Americans and others, tend to value directness over respect and formality and equality over status or position. We can see the main differences between very distinct cultures and also language families. However, it would be false to assess an individual based on values of a culture he belongs to as Peterson explains: “One important caveat here is that values are not predictors of behaviour. That is, even if you know someone has a certain values, you cannot necessarily predict what the person will actually do in certain situations” (Peterson, 2004, p. 23).

The preceding statement strongly correlates with stereotypes. Peterson (2004) describes that stereotype is a statement used in a negative way towards a group of people. Stereotypes mean that we apply features of a group or an individual an entire group. What Peterson describes is a brief but accurate definition of cultural stereotypes, a type of behaviour which is possibly familiar to all of us. If we try to think about at least an example of such behaviour in the last century, the search might lead us to Jews and their culture. Jews have been oppressed for centuries and forced to live in segregation from others; they were considered mean and selfish. In this case, people have assumed that these types of behaviour apply to all Jews. We can see these conclusions even in video games, again connected to specific nationalities or ethnicities.

For instance, Russian gamers tend to be loud and argue a lot. Gamers from other countries often assume that all Russian people are obnoxiously loud and annoying. On the other hand, Finnish people tend to be very reserved in expressing their emotions in games, so the stereotypes about Finnish people would possibly stand “Finnish people are cold and unfriendly”. Brooks Peterson also discusses this type of behaviour: “For instance, we might know one Chinese man who is extremely quiet and shy, and because of this, we conclude that all Chinese people are quiet and shy” (Peterson, 2004, p. 26). This approach can easily lead to the misinterpretation of Chinese culture and our perception of Chinese people

in general. The vast majority of the stereotypes are harmful or at least connected to less desirable features of human behaviour.

Nevertheless, Peterson (2004) introduces so-called positive stereotypes, an example of which might be statements such as “Asians are good at math” or “Germans make wonderful engineers”. Peterson follows up on his narrative above: “The problem with positive stereotypes is that like negative ones, they only paint the partial picture of the person you are dealing with” (Peterson, 2004, p. 27). Alexander M. Czopp, Aaron C. Kay, and Sapna Cheryan in an article named “Positive Stereotypes Are Pervasive and Powerful” offer their perspective on positive stereotypes by stating that they can mainly improve others’ negative impressions of one’s group.

As stated above, both positive and negative stereotypes frequently appear in games and especially in gaming communities devoted to a particular game. Players can experience negative stereotypes in almost every multiplayer game that involves team play and requires clear communication, especially when a team does not work in a coordinated way, or players fail to comply with a particular strategy. Scenarios mentioned above might lead to misunderstandings and angry exchanges. Connected to values individual cultures share or differ in, each player might react to the situation differently.

Livermore offers a quite similar description of stereotypes: “A stereotype is a belief that all members of a group act the same way” (Livermore, 2013, p. 84). He also introduces another critical term connected to culture, an archetype. Livermore describes it as a tendency of an individual or group of people to behave in a certain way, almost implying that some groups of people are predestined to behave in a particular way.

Unlike Peterson, Livermore talks about so-called sophisticated stereotypes “ideas that tend to be true of most people from a particular culture but are never loaded with negative judgment” (Livermore, 2013, p. 84). I think a comparison of the two points of view is essential, and I tend to agree with both scholars mentioned above.

Brooks Peterson divides culture styles in a set of 5 scales (See Figure 1), which are mainly used to simplify the assessment of the culture and what they value more and less. Peterson (2004) states that these culture scales are namely equality & hierarchy, direct & indirect, individual & group, task & relationship, risk & caution. He also implies that cultures that are oriented on equality tend to be self-directed, have flexibility in roles they play in a company or on a team. Furthermore, they have the freedom to challenge the

opinion of those in power, make exceptions, be flexible, and maybe bend the rules. Most importantly, these cultures treat men and women in basically the same way. On the other hand, the hierarchy-based cultures tend to take direction from those above, have definite limitations about appropriate behaviour for specific roles, respect, and not challenge the opinion of those who are in power because of their status and their position. Besides, they enforce regulations and guidelines and, most importantly, they expect men and women to behave differently and to be treated differently.

Indeed, these principles can be followed even in a game. We can interact with people in inefficiently, mainly because they have different values, simply said, they appear on the other side of the said of the scale. According to Peterson (2004), the scale of direct & indirect might seem self-explanatory but appear to be much more complicated than it looks. While culture with direct style tends to be more direct in speaking, the indirect style culture relies more on how something is said, more than what is said. This thinking might lead to cultural clashes or events of misunderstanding. Moreover, the first group is very open about issues and communicates concerns straightforwardly; the latter tend to avoid difficult issues and express concern tactfully.

In all, sometimes it is beneficial to communicate measures diplomatically and tactfully, and other times it might be considered impolite if we do not directly speak about the matter. The scale named individual & group orientation is closely connected to the world of gaming as it is to business situations.

1.2. CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE

The definition of cultural intelligence varies among scientists and linguists. One of the most competent explanations up to this date originates at the Cultural Intelligence Center, an organisation providing a much needed CQ training for numerous prolific brands, such as Google or Coca Cola. The definition reads like this:

Cultural intelligence (CQ) is a critical part of setting yourself apart in today's globalized world of artificial intelligence, machine learning, and innovation. It's the ability to relate and work effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds, and it goes beyond existing notions of cultural sensitivity and awareness. With cultural intelligence, you'll know how to strategically use cultural differences to come up with more innovative solutions. (Cultural Intelligence Center, n.d.)

On the other hand, Brooks Peterson sees cultural intelligence in a different light: “Cultural intelligence is the ability to engage in a set of behaviours that uses skills (i.e., language or interpersonal skills) and qualities (e.g., tolerance for ambiguity, flexibility) that are tuned appropriately to the culture-based values and attitudes of the people whom one interacts with” (Peterson, 2004, p. 89). He also states that score or grades from various IQ tests can be taken as permanent and unable to be changed, which can result in the belief that intelligence can be boiled down to an IQ score: “I propose we focus on defining and then increasing the cultural intelligence quotient (CQ), not measuring it” (Peterson, 2004, p. 88). Alternatively, school scores and grades are beneficial for studies. However, they do not necessarily make for a good person and will not help in real-life situations. Instead, the grades should work more like a rough estimate of one’s aptitude for being able to interact with others (CQ) or perform activities or solve problems using analytic skills (IQ).

David Livermore also provides a proper context to the matter of cultural intelligence: “Cultural intelligence is sometimes abbreviated as CQ because it was researched as an actual form of intelligence. So, there is an academically validated instrument that measures one’s cultural intelligence quotient or CQ” (Livermore, 2013, p. 12). However, based on this explanation, we might think, like any other type of intelligence, cultural intelligence can be accurately measured. However, the roughly estimated numbers work merely as an estimate, there is no clear correlation between CQ and being able to interact freely with others.

Soon Ang, Lynn van Dyne & Harry Triandis introduce in their renowned book entitled *Handbook of Cultural Intelligence: Theory, Measurement, and Applications* so-called metacognitive CQ, which is primarily concerned cultural consciousness of an individual and how aware they are when interacting with a member of a culture that is different from theirs. In a sense, its importance lies in an absorbed knowledge, which is then, in an effortless manner, applied to practice. What Ang et al. describe here is a set of knowledge inside the mind of an individual. It then influences their behaviour based on the culture they interact with. The metacognitive factor of cognitive has a vital role for three reasons. First, it promotes active thinking about people and situations when cultural backgrounds differ. Secondly, it allows individuals to evaluate and revise their mental maps, which, as a result, improve the accuracy of understanding. Moreover, it triggers critical

thinking about habits, assumptions, and cultural bounding thinks. In sum, the metacognitive factor allows the members of the interactions to not only understand each other's culture but also enrich their knowledge about differences between cultures.

Ang et al. (2015) also introduce cognitive CQ, which is closely related to metacognitive CQ. I would suggest that the difference between the above-introduced terms is on the basis on which people interact. While in metacognitive CQ prime role is on gathered and learned knowledge, in cognitive CQ it is on a conscious base. CQ then covers cultural norms, practices, and conventions in different cultural settings. Ang et al. (2015) continue with a statement that there exists a wide variety of cultures in the modern world; cognitive CQ indicates the knowledge and cultural universals as well as the knowledge of cultural differences. Due to the need for knowledge about cultural similarities and differences, cognitive CQ is just as crucial as metacognitive CQ. It strongly influences the way people in cross-cultural situations make decisions, perform and interact with others.

The second loci that requires a thorough description due to its importance is motivational CQ. By the definition of Ang et al. (2015), this loci is essential for the assessment of the capabilities of an individual to direct their attention toward cultural differences. He describes motivational CQ as a unique form of a self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation in cross-cultural situations. The importance of the terms, as mentioned earlier, lies in an underlying sense of confidence and interest in new things.

The final loci Ang et al. (2015) identify is behavioural CQ that appears quite self-explanatory because it covers the capability of an individual to exhibit appropriate verbal and non-verbal actions when interacting with people from different cultural backgrounds. Like the previously described loci, the behavioural CQ is critically essential because behaviour is often the most visible characteristic of social interaction. Furthermore, the behavioural CQ has its base on a broad repertoire or range of behaviours.

Doreen J. Gooden, Carole Ann Creque & Claudette Chin-Loy also identify behavioural CQ as crucial as they explain in their article entitled "The Impact Of Metacognitive, Cognitive And Motivational Cultural Intelligence On Behavioral Cultural Intelligence": "Studies have shown that people with high behavioral CQ behave appropriately in cross-cultural settings. Thus, behavioral CQ allows individuals to use appropriate behaviors when interacting with others from different cultural background" (Gooden, Creque, & Loy, 2017).

Livermore (2013) relates to the thoughts of Ang et al. with a similar take: “based on research among 30,000 professionals from more than 50 countries, we have found that four capabilities consistently emerge among those who can be described as culturally intelligent: CQ Drive, CQ Knowledge, CQ Strategy, and CQ action. These four features are to be improved as their importance decreases over time” (Livermore, 2013, p. 12). Livermore (2013) states that CQ drive predestines us to be genuinely interested and motivated to learn about different cultures. This part of the CQ is vital but often overlooked. Livermore follows with a simple tip to measure one’s CQ drive in real-life settings: “To assess and develop your CQ drive, find your *other* (someone who has a different ethnicity or nationality or who subscribes to a different political party) and spend time with this person, seeking to understand him or her” (Livermore, 2013, p. 12). Based on the statement above, games certainly work as a medium to connect to other people or groups of people by playing video games or chatting about them. Games then appear as a sort of Transnational Commonality which connects people across culture, ethnicities, and religions. Transnational Commonality is described in a material named “Intercultural Tool Box” by the “Department of English at the Faculty of Education at the University of West Bohemia” as a cultural phenomenon that people across all cultures share. It can include interest in musical bands, football clubs, or collecting old coins, but it should not be confused with universal values like family; instead, it helps us identify cultural phenomena that cross borders.

According to Livermore (2013), knowing about every culture around the world is not the task of CQ knowledge. He offers excellent recommendations for improving a CQ knowledge by proposing not just to read a book about cultures of the world, history or other areas of life but he also introduces Great Courses- a series of audio and video courses designed for the lifelong learners not only college students. He reiterates that it is almost vital to have a basic understanding of culture the person we interact with comes from and Great Courses make that undoubtedly possible.

Livermore (2013) introduces the CQ action, which is crucial for smooth cultural interaction stating that CQ action simply means that all the other components of CQ (Drive, Knowledge and Strategy) are combined and put into use, and they influence how efficiently we interact so that we can reflect on it accordingly. Alternatively, CQ action is the ability to flex our behaviour or approach based on the culture we interact with.

As seen, CQ action is very close to behavioural loci introduced by Ang et al. as it is the most visible part of the set of capabilities mentioned above. However, loci and capabilities would not be useful without formerly described CQ action and behavioural loci. Livermore raises a critical question, which stands “What are the aspects of your behaviour that need to be adjusted a bit in order to be understood and respectful with a particular person?”(Livermore, 2013, p. 14). Furthermore, he recommends that there is virtually no better way to improve the CQ action of an individual than with hands-on experiences. This would usually require travel expenses, but gamers get hands-on experience without having to leave their bedroom. The clash of cultures in games happens virtually every time players log on.

I leave out the description of CQ strategy as it is closely tied to the game strategy that I explain in sub-chapter 1.4.

1.3. A BRIEF HISTORY OF GAMING EVOLUTION

First words come from Isabela Granic et al., who were already featured in the introductory section of this thesis who raise a hot topic of the negative impact of the video games: “Video games are a ubiquitous part of almost all children’s and adolescents’ lives, with 97% playing for at least one hour per day in the United States. The vast majority of research by psychologists on the effects of gaming has been on its negative impact: the potential harm related to violence, addiction, and depression” (Granic et al., 2014).

When taking a closer look at the positive and negative impact of games, the widespread public belief is that they negatively impact the health of the players, make them less sociable or their sight grows worse over time. However, Granic et al. (2014) claim that playing games improve a wide range of cognitive skills rather than being intellectually lazy and sedating.

As for the beginning of the video games industry Paul Glancey explains in his book named *The Complete History of Computer and Video Games* that it started in 1962 with a game called Space War, by a student at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Steve Russel.

For our purposes, the description of a somewhat chaotic situation of early gaming evolution and the dawn of first game is not necessary as those were the times when players mostly played by alone in their homes and did not have many opportunities to meet other players expect for gatherings or small gaming events. To understand the importance of the

interaction of players, we need to explore the events of the last decade of the 20th Century, and the dawn of the new Millenium and Hadzinsky provides a brief overview of it:

The nineties would prove to be an interesting time for the multi-billion dollar video game industry. With popularity back on the rise, there was only one thing limiting the seemingly infinite potential of video games: technology. Since the industry relies on electronic and computer devices, the games can only be as complex as the technology is advanced. The 90s were a time of large advancements in computing and graphics technologies which in turn had a huge impact on the video game industry. (Hadzinsky, 2014, p. 10)

“History.com” (2017) summarises the somewhat chaotic situation at the end of 20th century and the dawn of 21st stating that Sony, as a most prominent figure in the industry, dominated the video game market and started the next century still on top, releasing multiple new features to their consoles and led the industry by example. The Playstation 2, released in 2000 and able to play original Playstation games, which is the successor of Playstation 2, would become the best-selling game console of all time.

Consequently, games began to have a lot more influence on society as they started to spread massively at the start of the new Millenium, as Chad Hadzinsky observes: “Digital distribution and the rise of the Internet in gaming fueled the video game industry at the turn of the 21st century...The Internet brought gamers together like never before, allowing them to play with and against each other, changing the landscape of game and console development” (Hadzinsky, 2014, p. 12).

1.4. CQ PRACTICE AND GAMING STRATEGY

Merriam-Webster dictionary defines strategy this way, “The science and art of employing the political, economic, psychological, and military forces of a nation or group of nations to afford the maximum support to adopted policies in peace or war” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

So far, we have gathered much useful information about cultural intelligence. Knowledge about culture, awareness of ourselves and intercultural social skills result in so-called cultural intelligence. Peterson (2004) suggests that these three areas work as legs of a tripod, and all three components must be in place in order for intelligence to grow (See Figure 2), and all of them have to work simultaneously.

CQ strategy goes a long way and the two capabilities mentioned above explained above in sub-chapter 1.3 would be practically useless if the strategy is not crafted and applied to cross-cultural interactions as Livermore explains: “CQ strategy is having the capability to be aware and to plan appropriately in light of your cultural understanding. In other words, CQ strategy allows you to step back amid a cross-cultural experience and reflect on what is happening” (Livermore, 2013, p. 13). Thus, CQ strategy is then very closely related mainly to CQ drive and CQ knowledge because we need the drive and motivation to reflect on a given situation, and we need the knowledge about matter in order to assess the interaction accurately. Overall, according to Livermore (2013), the CQ Strategy principally works as the lynchpin between being interested in the assessment of the interaction and knowing about different cultures and their values and the same as being able to actually reflect on it, be self-aware and to plan accordingly.

Many people involved in international business and also in gaming, speak the English language. However, a vast majority of them are not native speakers of English. Therefore, they must put much effort into learning English principles while also focusing on the cultural part of the language. Anna Mauranen from the University of Helsinki explains in her book entitled *Exploring Elf: academic English shaped by non-native speakers* that it is hugely positive to be a non-native speaker when communicating in English because non-native speakers can interact better with people with a different linguistic and cultural background from theirs. Mauranen (2012) argues that native speakers of the English language focus mainly on their linguistic background when they interact with non-native speakers of the English language since both parties strive for linguistic competence. Besides, speakers with English as their mother tongue are keener on paying attention to linguistic errors by their non-native counterparts as they have the proper accuracy. She explains that non-native speakers tend to be more aware of each other’s cultures, which can consequently positively impact their use of the language while native speakers do not experience such scenario as they are not exposed to the potential differences.

When focusing on areas to improve in order to have better cultural intelligence, Peterson (2004) offers vital tips for better cultural interaction by highlighting the importance of “keep it simple” rule especially we encounter a low proficiency speaker. He recommends using short sentences and easy-to-understand vocabulary. He also supports the idea of repeating and asking for feedback in exchange.

Other tips are also beneficial and give us a good overview of a speaker, who tries to understand others and treats them with respect: “Speak slowly and clearly – but no loudly. Be sure not to speak insultingly slowly, and be sure not to shout...Often when people don’t speak our language, we seem to treat as though that they are deaf or even worse, *slow*” (Peterson, 2004, p. 193).

The assumption of Peterson is very accurate and fitting for video games, as gamers often come from places and countries, where English is not the primary language, they all need to respect each other and understand their differences.

Barbara Seidlhofer from the University of Vienna continues in her book *Understanding English as a Lingua Franca* the narrative of Anna Mauranen by stating that languages frequently change through the interaction between people of different backgrounds, cultures and even ethnicities as the participants of the interactions influence each other’s use of language. This scenario does not take place only in a business meeting but also in video games since players generally come from various cultural backgrounds. Besides, while playing video games, the players practice the English language extensively, which may have a significant influence on the language as well as the language use of the players. Seidlhofer (2011) explains that it is expected of players to influence each other’s language use which may also have a considerable impact on the development of the language mainly because the vast majority of English speakers are non-native speakers.

2. MODERN GAMING AND AVATARS

2.1 GAMING AVATARS AND THEIR HISTORY

In the words of “Techopedia” (2018), an avatar is described as a personalized graphical illustration, which is used to represent a computer user in a game itself. Furthermore, the real representation of an avatar can be in two distinctive forms. The first one is in a two-dimensional form of an icon in Internet forums, game chat or virtual worlds. More visible is the three-dimensional form, for example, in games or virtual worlds. Consequently, avatars are an inevitable part of the game and are used widely on websites and in online role-playing games. They also are an essential part of Internet chat, Internet messaging systems, blogs and artificial intelligence, particularly virtual reality.

Merriam-Webster dictionary (2020) tracks the origins of the term Avatar to the Sanskrit, where it means descent. The term appeared in English for the first time in the late 18th century, and it referred to the descent of a deity to the earth—typically, the incarnation in the human form of Vishnu or another Hindu deity. Moreover, it was used to address any incarnation in human form. As the technology has evolved, the term shifted its meaning but only a bit, because for a few decades now, it refers to the image that represents computer users or video games players in an electronic medium.

The technological-based web “Techopedia” (2018) claims that designers Chip Morningstar and Joseph Romero were the first to use the term Avatar concerning computer user identification. The simple avatar appears as small graphic files on a website, such as gaming forums or chat rooms. “Techopedia” follows that these images often picture a beast or a hero placed next to the username. Indeed, some websites tend to provide a wide range of avatars to choose from. “Techopedia” (2018) further explains that avatar interacts with the game environment by avatars walk within the digital landscape, and they manipulate the surrounding environment. The player makes the avatar move by using the keyboard and mouse.

The connection between the players and their avatars is quite clear. It all starts with choosing particular appearance qualities and personality traits. However, there also exists a psychological connection between those two figures mentioned above as Florence Chee, Marcelo Vieta & Richard Smith explain in an essay entitled “Online Gaming and the Interactional Self: Identity interplay in situated practice” by stating that the game environment can become very satisfactory and beneficial for individuals with limited social

skills. This situation happens because the players focus merely on a common objective, and they achieve goals and build trust through the progress in the game, and their differences are not vital for the team play as each player in the team is dependent on his teammates and fulfils his role in the team.

Taking upon the task of creating an avatar, players can assemble any features, personality traits, or qualities, which he is not in possession outside of the game. Thus, he or she can practically live a different life, often better than the real one. The interaction in disguise can improve not only the communicative skills of the players but also boost the self-esteem and break the walls of shyness.

Amy Bear, in an article “Me, My Self, My Character and I” summarizes in-depth the somewhat symbiotic relationship between the players sitting at the computer and their avatars in the game itself. She narrates that the player feels all the action of the avatar and it impacts him profoundly. Those “two” experience a wide range of emotions from failure to success, the symbiotic relationship between them bolsters self-esteem of the player behind the keyboard and somewhat bridges actual and ideal self, and teaches useful life skills. Bear (2010) highlights that the most interesting fact about the relationship is that those two cannot exist in the game environment without each other, as the avatar would not be able to act without the guidance of the player and the player would not exist in the game space without his avatar.

The process of players choosing their avatar is explained above and seems quite simple and straight-forward; however, we need to address a few crucial questions. “What look do players choose for their avatars? What characteristics do they prefer? How attractive do they want them to be?”.

Research in the form of an online survey among MMORPG (massively multiplayer online role-playing game) players was performed by so-called Daedalus Project run by Nick Yee, a research scientist whose scope is mainly on psychology of players and how it transfers to face-to-face interaction. This research provides us with useful data and answers our prepared questions effectively. The number of participants in the survey has exceeded 4000.

Firstly Yee (2008) narrates about character height preference (See Figure 3). He indicates that the results of the study show a clear correlation between the actual height of the people who participated in the survey and the height of their avatar. In other words, people who have chosen their avatar to be tall tend to be tall in real life as well. Moreover, men are keener on making their avatars taller than they are themselves.

Second studied area of the survey was concerned with character attractiveness preference (See Figure 4). In this regard, Yee (2008) identified that a vast majority of participants decided their avatar to be in the above-average area of the scale of attractiveness. More specifically, Men were almost split between the average and attractive choices, women, on the other hand, were twice as likely to prefer the attractive choice.

Yee delivers conclusions of the survey with an accurate explanation:

Overall the findings show two interesting things. First of all, while players prefer more idealized (i.e., taller and more attractive) characters, much of avatar choice seems to revolve around mirroring; taller people prefer taller avatars, older people prefer older avatars, male players prefer more masculine characters, and female players prefer more feminine characters. (Yee, 2008)

Yee's second study named *The Proteus Effect: Behavioral Modification via Transformations of Digital Self-Representation* strictly focuses on the transfer of behaviour from game to face-to-face interaction based on the avatar's features.

Interestingly, Yee (2007) reports that "participants given avatars that were 10cm taller than the confederate stranger were more confident and aggressive in a negotiation task than participants given avatars that were 10cm shorter than the confederate" (Yee, 2007, p. 97). In all, how friendly or confident a person is in a virtual environment can be significantly influenced by manipulating certain features of the avatars.

Most vital results emerged when Yee studied if avatars influence our behaviour even outside the virtual environment as he states that participants with taller avatars negotiate with participants with shorter avatar both inside and outside of the game. Yee (2007) claims that avatars not only change our behaviour in the game space both they also have a strong influence on how we interact with others face-to-face.

2.2 DESCRIPTION AND IMPORTANCE OF CERTAIN GAMES

I have decided to introduce and analyse the impact of certain video games in this chapter. These video games are closest to my heart, and I have spent a fair amount of time playing each of them and, speaking for myself, they shaped me as a person who I am today and helped me a lot during my, childhood years. These games are Counter-Strike: Global Offensive, Age of Empires II and World of Warcraft.

The official blog of the game Counter-Strike: Global Offensive provides a brief introduction to the game description: “Counter-Strike: Global Offensive (CS:GO) expands upon the team-based first person shooter gameplay the original Counter-Strike pioneered when it launched in 1999. Two teams compete in multiple rounds of objective-based game modes with the goal of winning enough rounds to win the match” (Blog Counter-Strike, n.d).

This prolific first-person shooting game features several distinctive game-modes, such a casual, arms race, wingman and, most importantly, competitive. As implied in the name of the last-mentioned game-mode, it features a very competitive environment which takes place on maps that were created by the CS:GO community members with the help of developers of the map. Counter-Strike has always served as a sort benchmark test of skills and aiming abilities of each player. This principle fits the focus of competitive mode perfectly. Two teams fight in two teams of five, where every player is responsible for one avatar. The avatars do not possess any special abilities, and all the hard work has to be done by the players. The only difference between the two teams is in the clothes they wear. Counter-Terrorists wear police gear in the shades of blue and Terrorists wear a long-sleeve green T-shirt and Camo pants. The difference in gameplay is made by the players, who decide the roles in the team by themselves. Team roles vary from “entry-fragger” to “lurker” and others. The responsibility of an entry-fragger is to open rounds in favour of his team, mainly by neutralizing an avatar or several avatars in the enemy team to gain his team considerable advantage. Another vital role is an “in-game leader” who is in charge of devising a strategy for each round. This role is usually assigned to the most experienced player, who understands the game well and is good at predicting the strategy of the opponents. The objective of Terrorists is to plant the bomb on one of the bombsites and let it detonate or neutralize all avatars from the enemy team. Counter-Terrorists are responsible for the protection of the bombsites from Terrorists and either disallowing them to plant the bomb or disarming it before it explodes. Indeed, the round also can be won by neutralizing

all avatars in opposing team. For every round won, the teams receive one point. The game ends when one of the team reaches a total of sixteen rounds out of thirty.

As explained CS:GO is a strategy-based game, where an abundance of team play and efficient communication is required. The communication can be provided in three ways. Firstly, by using in-game voice chat where only players from one team can talk to each other, secondly, by typing text messages in the game chat either to both of teams or, once again, to his team exclusively. Last, and possibly the most used way of communicating takes place in voice chat applications such as Discord, Ventrilo or TeamSpeak, where the teams discuss strategy and give each other information about enemy positions of enemy avatars on the map. The players in the team are often of different nationalities, religions and, most importantly, speak different first languages. This fact results in the necessity to use one common language, which is often the English language. As explained in the chapter about CQ practice and game strategy, non-native speakers of English tend to be more respectful to other non-native speakers and treat a more polite way than native speakers of English language do, and my own experience is just the same.

Overall, in CS:GO players mix from various countries and must cooperate in order to achieve the team objective. This scenario firmly convinces them to be disciplined, follow a specific strategy and use a common language, which might seem like a step out of the comfort zone, however, even intercultural interactions is also a step out of the comfort zone. They can sometimes be very unpredictable even if we have good knowledge and awareness about the culture the person we meet belongs to.

The second game I would like to focus on is called Age of Empires II. It is a game based on rather “science-fictional” events but contains authentic cultures and their features. The names are the same; the evolution of each culture is portrayed very accurately. The game starts with each player choosing one individual culture (Persia, Mongols, or other). Their task is to evolve each culture in a given way and, as a result, overcome other players, who represent different cultures by devising a better strategy, defeating their armies and consequently, destroying cultures by demolishing their cities and slaying their people. Many vital skills are required to succeed—namely, a sense of strategy and the ability to devise a good game plan. The significant benefit of the game is the fact that the evolution and abilities of individual cultures are different. It means that in order to succeed, one has to follow a strategy, be disciplined, and respect the strengths of the other players’ cultures. Also, in-game currency teaches the player how to invest cleverly and how not to waste

resources or effort. The in-game currency features gold coins and even resources, which are wood, stone, and gold. The players use resources for building infrastructures, such as houses for villagers, patches for growing crops, barracks and even churches or universities where researches needed for the evolution of the culture are held. Besides, players can, in exchange for resources, declare peace with other players to gain advantage or smoothly evolve his culture without fear of being attacked. Beyond that, if players reach an agreement, they can become allies and fight together against others.

Overall, playing a game of Age of Empire requires steady effort, game knowledge and practice. Furthermore, a drive is vital, especially when losing. If a player has a good CQ drive, he can make the most of the failure and individual mistakes and become better. This scenario can be accurately applied to intercultural interactions as they might not be as smooth all the time. As explained above, misunderstanding happens, and if players can learn from their mistakes and can combine their knowledge about the culture, awareness about themselves and others and their drive, they inevitably become more culturally intelligent. CS:GO, and Age of Empires differ firmly in the way in which they benefit the players. While in CS:GO players work in a team to devise a strategy and overcome their enemies, in Age of Empires, the strategy is solely the task of each player. A significant positive is an evolution scheme of each culture, which players follow and learn to respect.

The last game I am going to introduce is World of Warcraft. It is a famous role-playing game which features a group of players who form an alliance and work as a team. These players then cooperate to kill monsters and achieve objectives. As with Counter-Strike Global Offensive in order to move forward, the discussion about tactics and strategy mainly takes place through Skype, Ventrilo or Discord. Similarly to other team-based games, World of Warcraft much teamwork. However, killing monsters is not the only way to progress in the game. One needs to gather gear, which one can obtain by killing the monsters as mentioned earlier. The gear often includes clothes and weapons or other equipment, which helps the players to make their avatars stronger, Unlike Counter-Strike the game never ends because new quests appear after one is completed and players still can obtain new gear.

2.3 EXPERIENCES OF GAMERS

“I'm always going to love video games ... they're so big a part of my life that I'm a completely different person because of them.” This is a direct quote from Adam, a casual video game player. He participated in a study named “Understanding the lives of problem

gamers: The meaning, purpose, and influences of video gaming” which was performed by a group of scientists which consisted of Jing Shi, Rebecca Renwick, Nigel E. Turner and Bonnie Kirsh at the University of Toronto.

Adam as a gamer certainly has his group of friend from other countries and culture, so he has that needed variety in his life, recognises differences between people and knows how to behave when meeting people with different cultural backgrounds. Peterson (2004) agrees, that variety in life can result in more flourishing lifestyle and gives us more choice to pick from: “The more we know about how other people live, speak walk, dress, work or play, the more we can emulate them if we so choose” (Peterson, 2004, p. 84).

Peterson (2004) moreover talks about the term connectedness, which is sometimes wrongly replaced by the term community. He explains that while we might not be in a community with other people around the world, the Internet allows us to be connected with them and share whatever we want even if they are half a world away.

Furthermore, the study from Jing Shi et al. (2019) reports that all the participants expressed the opinion that they grew up with video games since their childhood, either their family member encouraged them to start playing games, or they watched their family member playing. Moreover, the participants reported that gaming is an inseparable part of their lives and shaped them as human beings. The core of their opinion revolves around games being an excellent way to fill idle time and provide them with a sense of doing and engages them with their network and friends.

If we take a look at the point of view of Peterson, who states: “The global spread of technology affects what we eat, how we get to work, what we do for work, what we wear, what we do for leisure, who we talk to and know” (Peterson, 2004, p. 73), we can agree that the people we interact mould how we interact with others, how we think and what we do. Understandably, gamers who have gamer friends are keener on playing games and talking about them, rather than doing anything else. Looking back at the example of Adam from the beginning of this chapter, we can understand that Adam perceives gaming as a big part of his life mainly because it connects him to other gamers which gives him a sense of belonging.

Kenny Schrub, a well-experienced player CS:GO, who plays under a nickname KennyS, opens this segment by narrating about transitioning from a team which consisted of only French player to one where French nationality still has an advantage above the rest, but the primary language of the team has changed. Schrub states in an interview with a so-

called “Striker” for a website “Hltv.org” that he fancied the idea of playing with players with different cultural background for a long time, mainly because he played with almost every relevant player in his home country, France. Striker (2019) reports about Schrub that he likes that his current teammates respect him because of who he is now not who he was previously. Currently, the starting line-up of a team called “G2 esports” consists of three French players and two Serbians, which is an excellent example of a cultural clash. Besides, Schrub explains his motivation behind playing with teammates with different cultural backgrounds and his experiences with communication in English by saying that his English is good outside of the game, however it is always harder in the game environment. He understands that communication is key in a game like CS:GO and he realises that once his team have manages to handle issues around communication things it is going to be much easier for his team to play better.

Schrub comes from a country with a competitive culture, rather than a cooperative one. That simply explains he loves challenges, dares to leave his comfort zone and play with the best players in the world because he knows that only by playing the best, he can improve to the best of his abilities. Livermore clarifies the importance of competition in the modern western world: “competition is considered a good thing, even though the competition can be so fierce that at times it becomes very aggressive. The driving assumption is the `survival of the fittest`: The tough will win, and competition will force you to innovate, adapt, and thrive or become obsolete” (Livermore, 2013, p. 39).

Furthermore, the study by Shi et al. (2019), reports that the gamers think that it is easier for them to play video games in the comfort of their homes rather than participate in activities which require a lot of movement or focus. Since the majority of the participants played after they arrived home from school or work, they reported feeling too tired to engage in anything else other than gaming. The fact that all participants had their network or group of friends who shared the same or similar interest in video games has great relevance for our purposes. They could share experiences either by merely playing together online or attending gaming events/conventions together. Moreover, gamers also used games as a tool or way of keeping in touch with friends who live far away and even in different countries.

However, there is a negative aspect that could easily become a massive threat to well-being or the players. In these aspects, we can include addiction to games, mainly by playing too much and losing contact with the outside world. The process can lead to serious problems

as following experience shows on the example of a gamer named Thomas English in an article entitled “How to play video games in moderation” on the website “GameQuitters” where he confesses about his addiction to games and League of Legends. He reveals that at first, he enjoyed games, but then his desire transitioned into a situation which seriously threatened his well-being. He raises a crucial question everyone who plays games extensively should ask themselves “Is it worth it?”.

Following experience comes from a bit different field, professional snooker. Former World Snooker Champion Neil Robertson reveals in an interview for “GameQuitters” named “Neil Robertson Reveals Video Game Addiction Impacted His Career and Family” that he is an addictive person with an addictive personality. The interviewer Iain Fenton (2019) reports that merely means that when he takes his shot at something, he tries to be the best. Robertson confesses that his addiction on FIFA, World of Warcraft and League of Legends hurt his ambitions in snooker and took a toll on his family life as well.

The confession above obviously partially supports the fears about gaming being more negative than positive. There is a thin line between playing games for fun and being addicted to gaming. Story of Neil Roberston might serve as an excellent memento for others who might struggle with gaming addiction. Livermore (2013) states that: “cultures that are more oriented around being competitive are more focused on achievement, success, and results” (Livermore, 2013, p. 36), which is precisely a case of Neil Robertson, Thomas English and thousands of other players. In all, gamers from competitive cultures tend to put a lot of emphasis on succeeding, and so they might overdo with games, and their harmless hobby might become an ambitious pursuit for achievements.

In sum, games serve as a great tool for connecting to others and having fun, but if not played in moderation and with a right attitude, they might disconnect an individual from the real world a jeopardize the quality of his life.

3. THE FUTURE OF GAMING

So far, we have introduced ourselves to various areas of gaming and how their principles apply to cultural interactions. We still need to clarify how the trend of games impacting the lives of gamers, and the whole society will evolve and whether games might be even more helpful in the future. In the following chapters, I introduce three specific areas in which video games should excel the most and how it impacts the CQ.

3.1 VIDEO GAMES FOR TEACHING ENGLISH

A scholar Jared Baierschmidt introduces a programme called “Learning English through Video Gaming” as a 15-week elective course offered for two years to third- and fourth-year English majors at a midsized language university in Japan.

According to Baierschmidt (2014), the primary goal of the course was to practice and improve English of the learners mainly outside of the game, utilizing new ways of practice. The secondary goal was of similar importance; it explicitly aimed at bolstering the confidence of the learners and enabling them to communicate comfortably with other speakers of English about games. Additionally, the practice mentioned above took place with numerous Exchange students who visited the university every year and were gamers themselves.

The most exciting activity in the programme was Team Multiplayer activity which Baierschmidt (2014) describes as a cooperative team play where only the first player is eligible to shoot enemies, and his ally rescues hostages and sort of serves as a “bait”. He highlights the importance of productive dialogue and good team play in order to defeat enemies, and rescue hostages.

This type of scenario sounds very familiar to us. When I explained the Game Strategy, I mentioned that many games require efficient communication and an abundance of team play. Moreover, the scenario mentioned above describes in-depth how players divide roles in the team and contribute to achieving a common objective. Besides, these players do not have the same native language, so they are a part of a cross-cultural interaction as well as part of a team. As we do not live in a perfect world, the requirements above are not always met, and the players might experience frustration. Peterson (2004) agrees as he states that increasing culture intelligence is not an overnight process but instead walking in an uphill sand: two steps forward and one step back.

Baierschmidt (2014) delivers the conclusion of the programme and individual activities stating that all respondents found the course to be useful to their studies, namely the Team Multiplayer Activity because it enabled to use a variety of language skills during the playing. Besides, the activity encouraged them to communicate actively with their partner in order to achieve a common objective.

In an article “Exactly How To Teach With Video Games In The Classroom”, Founder & Director of TeachThought Terry Heick claims that despite downsides of using video games in schools, such as Wi-Fi access, parental concern or mature and violent content, it is inevitable that games will soon play a vital role in every classroom. Alternatively, as we have already seen in the case of elective course conducted by Jared Baierschmidt, victories might come at high costs, but they are worth it and benefit both schools and students.

3.2 VIRTUAL REALITY FOR LIFE

A website of technological giant “Lenovo” describes the Virtual Reality (VR) gaming as a new generation of computer games with virtual reality technology, which provides players with an immersive, first-person perspective of game action. The participants experience and influence the game environment at the same time through a variety of VR gaming devices and accessories. These accessories may include VR headsets, gloves, hand controllers and other equipment.

When we talked about avatars, we mentioned that they are our representation in the game space. In the world of virtual reality, we take a big leap forward as we are the avatars, and we get the full gaming experience. We do not need an avatar to represent us as we stand directly in the game ourselves a have the opportunity to perceive things more efficiently, for example in role-playing games where we are responsible for all the gestures and moves we make. If we imagine a world where there are not any boundaries and obstacles for interactions, then cultural clashes might not happen at all because we could already have a great understanding of the culture beforehand and as Livermore (2013) suggests we would not act like a bull in a china shop. We could have excellent preparation for any scenario that we might come across. Furthermore, this does not concern only cultural interactions; the virtual reality already helps in medicine, business and other areas of human life.

VR also finds its efficient use in other fields of human life as “Wired”, another significant technological web, describes: “Beyond games and other interactive

entertainment, VR shows promising applications for pain relief and PTSD, for education and design, for both telecommuting and office work” (Rubin, 2020).

Mehryar Nooriafshar, Ron Williams and Tek Narayan Maraseni explain in an article entitled “The use of virtual reality in education” that by using virtual reality, one can simply enter a non-existing world or interact with one that is difficult to access due to costs or safety reasons. One could seriously improve his CQ knowledge and CQ action without travel expenses or other limitations as Livermore (2013) implies that “hands-on” experience is the best way to improve CQ. He explains that having a CQ knowledge means “understanding broad cultural themes which include a grasp of different family structures, economic systems, and orientations toward time, authority, and uncertainty” (Livermore, 2013, p. 14), and we would be able to grasp all of it just by using a VR and other gadgets connected to it.

3.3 ESPORTS IS THE FUTURE

For many passionate gamers, and now even numerous sponsors, such as Red Bull, Intel or BMW, esports is a product of the future. However bizarre it might seem, playing video games or watching others play the game became very popular, almost trendy. In December 2019 The International Olympics Committee clarified its interest in video games as a part of the Olympic Games. Alternatively, it has specified its interest in games which are based on real sports, such as basketball or football. In an article named “Our Predictions for the Future of Esports” on the website “SportsCasting”, the author J.L. Seto explains similar movement: “In 2018, the Asian Games added esports as a demonstration sport. The Asian Games are a multi-sport event that happens every four years — similar to the Olympics. The fact that the Asian Games acknowledged the popularity and competitiveness of esports is massive” (Seto, 2020).

To properly analyse why is J.L. Seto so ecstatic about the inclusion of video games at the Asian Games and later even at the Olympic Games we need to realize that before the invention of multiplayer games and the commencement of the esports industry, globalisation allowed people with different cultural backgrounds to meet and interact, though very infrequently. In these events, we might include international championships in multiple sports, such as the football World Cup or World Championship in ice hockey, or we might mention casual business meetings. However, all events mentioned above, and dozens of others, take place infrequently, once a year, every two years or even every four years. The

world of esports and video games industry need not deal with this irregularity, as players from different cultures can interact twenty-four hours a day all year long.

Even though the evolution of esports is far from complete and the industry could fail in some time, rumours have it is the next big thing. To provide a clarification for the previous statement, we need to introduce some stats and explain how the ecosystem works. According to an article by Cate Evans entitled “Esports and the Future of Fandom” on a website named “MediaVillage”, the ecosystem of esports is far more complicated than it might seem from outside. There are dozens of tournaments organized across every continent except Antarctica and Africa. Evans (2019) moreover reports that multiple tournaments of most prolific games, such as CS:GO, DotA2, League of Legends or Fortnite are held in big conventions or sports stadium. The conventions include Barclays Center in New York or TD Garden in Boston.

As cultural interactions happen regularly, people experience culture clashes and have to adjust to the culture they interact with. The world of esports, specifically of international teams and massive esports competitions, is one cultural interaction after another. A website “ESLgaming” explains that about 173,000 fans attended Intel Extreme Masters World Championship 2017 in Katowice, Poland (See Figure 5) and the number fans on live streams or through features on Facebook or Twitter the World Championship reached 55 million.

What esports strives for is its legitimacy. For many years, gamers have been considered too lazy to do regular sports, so they played video games instead. Besides, the broad public still holds a stance of games being harmful or redundant in society. However, the truth is elsewhere, as recent news showcase. The outbreak of a dangerous virus COVID-19 sees esports on an enormous rise as a report by Nick Clarke in a newspaper “City A. M” shows. Clarke (2020) informs that Counter-Strike:Global Offensive broke its record in the middle of March, not just by hosting one of the most-watched esports tournament of all time but break the mighty number of 1 million concurrent players. That said, Twitch, the biggest streaming platform for games and other means of entertainment, enjoys a 15 per cent increase in watch time and gaming gets much attention even on Verizon US. In sum, the outbreak of dangerous virus COVID-19 made it very difficult for society to work regularly, esports in the meantime has never been as much in the spotlight as it is now.

The current situation of rising of esports amid COVID-19 outbreak might seem random at first. However, when observing closely, it is merely a part of something bigger

as Evans (2019) reports that it is inevitable that media companies, such as Disney, Comcast, and Netflix, will compete for esports someday. Additionally, in 2019, the CEO of Netflix, Reed Hastings, said that he is more afraid of Fortnite, another viral game, than he is of Disney, which only underlines previous statements about the future of esports.

As far as professional esports players are concerned Seto (2020) argues, that esports and regular athletes do not differ drastically, and he highlights that U.S. government takes esports athletes as regular athletes, especially in visa application situation. He claims that it is redundant to separate the two world and almost demonizing the gaming world. He predicts that esports will find its way in the lives of ordinary people, and society will recognize esports as a regular sports field.

Ryan Cheng, an esports enthusiast and avid gamer, predicts in an article entitled “A Future in Esports” that esports will continue its rise, but he raises a few issues which the community needs to address. Cheng (2019) primarily highlights the importance of every entity in maintaining and expanding the success of esports. Besides, he recommends the esports organisation to build an environment which would allow the esports athletes to practice, perform, and persevere.

It is essential to realize that the internet made it easier for people to socialize and interact. Therefore, video games have the same role, they connect people from all around the world and allow them to play games together, as well as chat about them and get to know each other’s cultures sufficiently and continuously increase their cultural intelligence.

CONCLUSION

Games always played an essential role in society, even before the invention of video games as they provided necessary leisure and fun. The society always needed a game for its evolution and improvement. Video games boosted these efforts enormously and allowed almost everyone to have access to wide ranges of games, from strategy or role-playing games to ones, which provide education and bolster our knowledge.

In the initial segment of my thesis, I emphasized explaining the connection between culture, cultural intelligence and video games. By using theories from scholars Brooks Peterson, Soon Ang, Lynn van Dyne & Harry Triandis and mainly David Livermore, I built a theoretical foundation of my thesis with a focus on how video games benefit players when interacting with people who are not like them, especially with a different cultural background. Besides, I analysed the individual parts of CQ and their relevance for video games and discovered that CQ strategy is vital for cultural interaction, but it would be powerless if other parts were not present. Moreover, I discovered multiple similarities between CQ practice and game strategy, and lastly, I highlighted the role of the English language in video games and cultural interactions.

The middle part of the thesis focused on the phenomena of game avatars and description of three video games (Counter-Strike: Global Offensive, Age of Empires & World of Warcraft) and how they make the players more culturally intelligent. I also included a few paragraphs about a brief history of video games and their evolution from the very first game to the contemporary ones. I explained the importance of avatars in the game space, and I described their symbiotic relationship with the players behind the keyboard. I discovered by Nick Yee's study that avatars and their qualities have a strong influence on our behaviour in the game environment, and they also impact our behaviour in face-to-face interactions. In the same segment, I provided stories of 3 players and their experiences that are not always positive because games are not necessarily helpful; they have a dark side when some conditions are not met. To provide an excellent comparison, I picked three players from different areas, a professional player of CS:GO, a leisure player and a snooker champion whose addiction almost destroyed his career.

The main aim of the last chapter was to predict how the game environment and avatar will look like in the upcoming years and decades. I introduced three main areas in which games should excel and benefit society the most. In these three areas, I included a sub-

chapter about the relevance of games in teaching and which obstacles prevent them from reaching their full potential in classes. The two most thorough analysis revolved around the massively evolving world of esports, where cultural interactions happen daily and where competitions and teams in them feature gamers from all continents (except for Antarctica), races, religions, and most importantly, vastly different cultures. These people go through cultural interactions every time they log in and many of them reported that games changed their lives enormously and made them more tolerant and welcoming to other people and different cultures. In the last chapter, I analysed the technology thought to be one step forward, the Virtual reality, which enables players to become avatars themselves and interact with others, experiment or even have training for actual cultural interaction. In sum, they would not need to use mouse or keyboard to move their avatar. I clarified that VR has excellent power and is not useful only in gaming but also in other fields, such as medicine.

The most important takeaway of this thesis is to realize that games can provide more than media shows. Games have been put in connection with criminal acts or thought to make players less socialized, but the truth is that if used appropriately, they definitely can benefit not only players but the whole society if some requirements are fulfilled. Second vital message to keep in mind is that video games connect people with different cultural backgrounds and allow them to have interaction on almost Olympic Games level, which firmly allows them to understand different cultures sufficiently.

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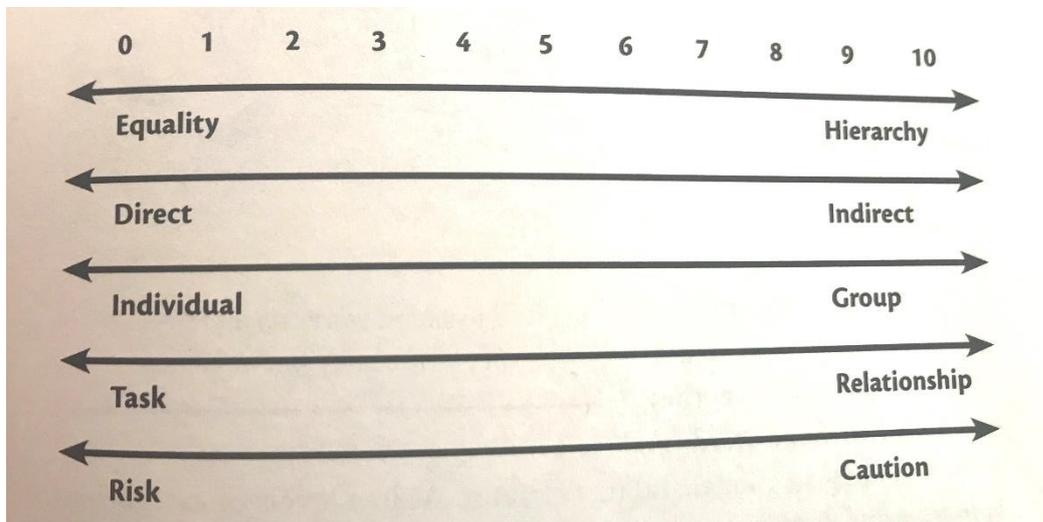
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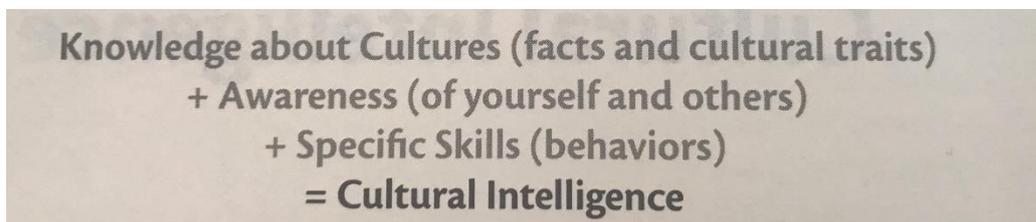
APPENDICES

Figure 1 – Five cultural scales



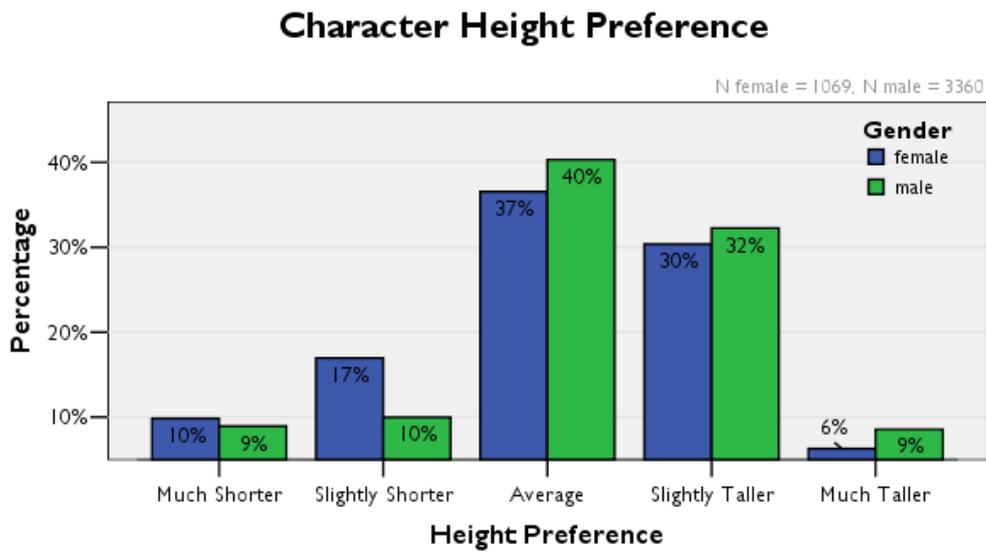
(Peterson, 2004, p. 33)

Figure 2 – Components of cultural intelligence



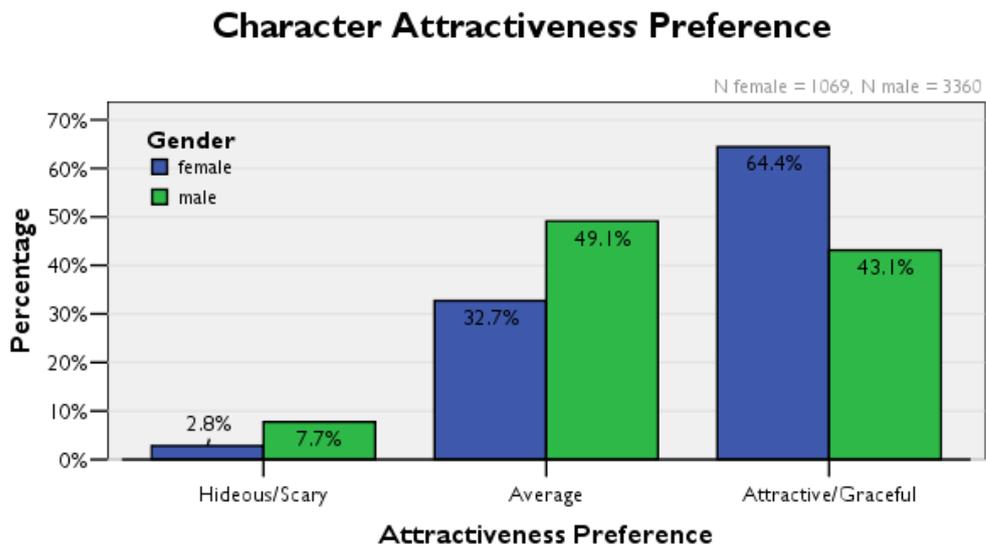
(Peterson, 2004, p. 178)

Figure 3 – Character Height Preference



(Yee, 2008)

Figure 4 – Character Attractiveness Preference



(Yee, 2008)

Figure 5 – IEM Katowice 2015



(Kristiansson, H. (2017). Retrieved from <https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-10684/intel-extreme-masters-season-11-finals-confirmed-for-two-weekends-in-march.htm>)

SUMMARY IN CZECH

Předmětem této bakalářské práce jsou výhody videoher pro hráče v mezikulturních interakcích. Cílem této práce je prozkoumat a objasnit způsoby, jak videohry zlepšují kulturní inteligenci hráče. Práce je rozdělena do tří kapitol. První kapitola analyzuje vztah mezi kulturou, kulturní inteligencí a videohrami. Dále sledává podobnosti mezi zlepšováním CQ a herní strategií, které je zásadní pro úspěch ve hře, respektive pro efektivní interkulturní interakci. Druhá kapitola se zabývá herními avatary a jejich významem pro herní prostředí s důrazem na vztah hráčů a jejich avatarů. Kromě toho se zde nalézá popis tří videoher a jejich výhod pro hráče a v neposlední řadě také zkušenosti hráčů s odlišným přístupem k videohrám. Závěrečná kapitola pojednává o budoucnosti videoher a avatarů ve třech oblastech a ukazuje, že hry v sobě mají více potenciálu, než se očekává.