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GAMERS' PERCEPTION OF ACCENTS AND STEREOTYPES IN VIDEO GAMES

CAMILLE MCDERMOTT¹

ABSTRACT

This paper reports on a research study examining how gamers respond to questions regarding accents used in video gaming. With the increase in technological advances, video games are becoming an intricate part of many people's lives. In this paper, we hope to critically analyze gathered research on the effects of repeatedly using stereotypical accents in video games to see if the continued use has influenced gamers' perceptions of minorities and/or ethnicities. The research will also indicate whether video games impact how gamers view accents in the gaming world and whether they recognize any stereotypical ideas they may have picked up while gaming.

Keywords: Video Gaming and Accents, Gaming Characters and Accents, Stereotypical Gaming Accents, Gamers' Perception of Accents, Gaming and Accent Survey

1.0 Introduction

Video games have become a multi-billion-dollar industry. The industry has impacted the world, from early arcades to modern-day gaming systems. In a study of video game demographics, Victor Yanev (2021) came up with the following interesting numbers. There are an estimated 2.5 billion gamers worldwide; the average age of most gamers is 35, 70% of whom are 18 and older. Sixty percent of Americans play almost every day. Forty-five percent are women. Seventy percent of parents believe that video games positively impact their children. One hundred eighty billion dollars is the estimated amount of money the gaming industry made in 2021. It is easy to see that the video game industry will significantly impact how people see the world.

There have been incredible advances in the areas of visuals and vocals. Characters are no longer pixilated. Gone are the days of strictly following a storyline through text. With the addition of vocalization, game producers have given players another avenue to identify characters. Unfortunately, accents have not been limited to helping identify any given place a character may be from. They have been used to suggest a character's attributes. Game producers create worlds with vast populations, religions, political parties, and cultures. When introduced to playable characters, these characters often have specific jobs and vocalizations. When video game developers assign pronunciation patterns to these characters, they often use stereotypical ideas to influence gamers' attitudes associated with said characters. The gaming industries fall short with the inconsistent use of accents and their continued use of stereotypical traits related to persons who speak with said accents.

In the past, early attempts to give characters accents were limited to just a few words here and there. For instance, in games like Mario Brothers, the lead character, Mario, who is of Italian descent, speaks with an Italian accent. Mario's vocabulary was limited to saying his name and

¹ **Recommendation:** This report was recommended for publication by **Dr. Holman Tse**, Assistant Professor of Linguistics at Saint Catherine University, Saint Paul, Minnesota, USA. He supervised a Directed Study project that led to this report and also taught a class on Language as Power (ENGL 3400W, Fall 2020), where the project idea originally developed. He has verified the empirical accuracy of the claims made in this publication and can be reached at: hbtse110@stkate.edu.

simple sentences like "Here we go." However, it did not take long for gaming companies to provide more substantial voices to their characters, and many of those characters were given particular accents. This raises the following questions:

1. Does the attribution of accents impact gamers' perception of depicted minorities and/or ethnicities?
2. Do gamers recognize that they might have preconceived ideologies they may not be aware of?

1.1 Literature Review

When looking at how gamers view accents used in video games, it appears that game producers did not just come up with how accents should be used by themselves. There seems to be a connection between video game accents and accents used in other forms of media—most young children "graduate" from cartoon movies to playing video games. Before being introduced to the gaming world, most children are indoctrinated into the world of stereotypical accent uses in other forms of media.

In Lippi-Green's book, *English with an Accent* (2012), a whole chapter is dedicated to the media's effects on children. In her chapter entitled "Teaching Children How to Discriminate", Lippi-Green discusses her research involving Disney animation. In the revised version of the book, she looks at 34 full-length animated movies, stating the name, the year of release, and the U.S. gross profits. Ultimately, her research consisted of a rundown of 371 animated characters. Areas of the research consisted of languages spoken, story setting, character distribution by story setting, sex and motivation, negative characters by a variety of English, and characters voiced, animated, or use of AAVE to imply ethnicity. She also looked at the role of women in these films. She concluded that "Disney films have a solid and long-lasting effect on the socialization and development of identity – for both self and others" (Lippy-Green, 126). She also noted that Disney often connects to good and evil based on race and ethnicity and that providing accents to specific characters helps perpetuate these ideologies.

Victor Yaney is a blogger connected to TechJury, an online platform of software experts that reviews the latest software and helps improve software companies' offerings. Yaney's work includes information on uses for Twitch and statistics on live streaming. For this study, Yaney's Blog entitled "Video Game Demographics: Who is Playing" shows the essential demographic information needed to see who is playing and from whom we are likely to gather information regarding this study.

1.2 Methodology

I conducted a survey to determine if gamers have a consensus about using accents in video games. The questions included general information about the type of gameplay and players' attitudes towards accents and character classes. The survey was accessible through Google Forms. The link to the survey was distributed through several social media sites, including Facebook, Discord, and TikTok. A survey was the best way to get information on this subject since Gaming and gamers can be found worldwide. I hoped to gather an audience from different states/countries by linking to the survey on several platforms.

The survey was offered to gamers eighteen and older with at least four years of gaming experience. The genre of gameplay included in the survey was **FPS** (First Person Shooters) like

Call of Duty and *Fallout*, **Real-Time Strategy** like *Age of Empires* and *Company of Heroes*, **JRPG** (Japanese Role-Playing Games) like *Final Fantasy* and *Dragon Quest*, **MMO** (Massively Multiplayer Online Games) like *World of Warcraft* and *RuneScape*, and **MOBA** (Multiplayer Battle Arena) like *League of Legends* and *Smite*. These particular genres were chosen because they involve giving characters voices. In contrast, many other games, such as Facebook, do not give characters voices. While many games are available through sites like Facebook and Crazy Games, these games often do not have vocals included. The storylines these games have were given to the player in writing, and players can give these characters any voice they choose. Games like *Royal Match* and *Gardenscapes* are top-rated and have inventive storylines. Still, similar to the original *Mario Brothers*, only one character speaks, and it is often a single saying like “Well Done.” With this limited vocabulary and multiple characters given story arcs, the game relies on the player to provide characters' voices, almost like reading a book. What voice people give to characters in these games may need to be a topic for a different study.

All surveys were counted provided they met the criteria for age and length of gameplay. No names were used, but Gamertags were gathered. This was done for two reasons. First, most gamers are partial to their Gamertag; when combined with age and location, we can ensure that gamers who participated in the survey only took it once. Second, we wanted to leave space for gamers' final thoughts. A **Gamertag** is the alter ego gamers use to help identify each other when Gaming. The survey was open for two weeks; 38 responses were collected, and 34 had the proper criteria to be counted for this study. People who took the survey were not required to answer all the questions.

Along with age and location, I asked questions regarding the type of gameplay and years of playing. Once we finished with demographics, we asked questions regarding gamers' perceptions of accents used in video games. Section 1 focuses on general demographic information, while Sections 2 and 3 deal specifically with accents and gaming characters:

Section 2

1. Do you think the accented voices given to characters in games are important?
2. Do you associate certain accents with specific characters?
3. Have you ever instantly liked or disliked a character based on their voice/ accent?
4. Do you think an accent can change your perceptions of a character?

Section 3

If you had to describe the vocalization for each of the following classes of characters, what would they sound like? Please use terms like American English, British English, African American English, Scottish/ Irish, Broken English, etc., when describing the vocalization types. To better understand what I was asking Gamers to do, it is essential to understand some of the typical personalities in games. They are listed here, but a full explanation of their skills, jobs, or powers will be given in 4.0.

1. Mage/wizards
2. Archer/ Hunter/ Ranger
3. Cleric/ Priest/Enchanter
4. Fighter/Warrior/Solder
5. Assassin/Ninja
6. Berserker/ Barbarian

7. Necromancer/Shadow-Knight
8. Summoner
9. Dancer/Bard
10. Dragoon/Lancer

2.0 Demographic Responses

The responders' answers are grouped into five different categories and analyzed accordingly.

2.1 Distribution of Responses by Age Groups

Table 1 is a pie graph showing the respondents' age range. Due to age criteria, for any survey that someone under the age of 18 took, 6% were removed from our results. The 18–25-year-olds had the most significant percentage of participants, with 38%, followed by 26–30-year-olds at 29%. 18% were between 31 and 36, leaving 9% of participants 37 years or older.

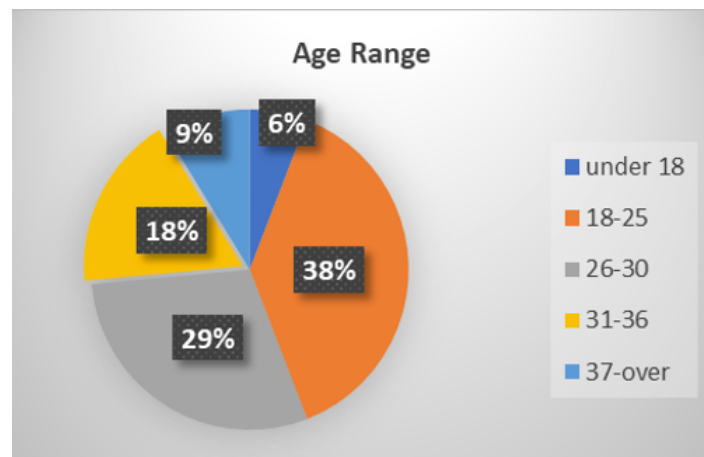


Table 1: Age Groups

The age ranges are not surprising here. For older game players 37 and older, there may have been some resistance to having gaming systems in the home when they were younger. Leading to them not being as invested as younger players now. Also, we have to consider work and family, which can impact how much time someone may have to play. As for age groups 31-36 and 26-30, these players may also have some of the limitations of the older game players, but gameplay may have been more acceptable for them in the home, allowing them to feel more comfortable in a digital environment. For those between the ages of 18-25, Gaming is an outlet that lets them escape the stress of family, school, and work.

2.2 Distribution of Responses by Gaming Experience

Ninety-four percent of participants indicated they had multiple years of experience, but 6% did not. Two participants did not have four or more years of gameplay. Those who did not have the required gameplay amount were left out of the survey results. I asked participants to have at least four years of gaming experience. I wanted players to have a history of playing games so that their answers to questions would represent continued game use. If the gamer answered questions, the results would be based on multiple games, not just one.



Table 2: Experience

2.3 Geographical Distribution of Responses

Participants came primarily from the USA: 41% from the Midwest, 28% from the Southern region, 9% from the West, and 6% from the Northwest. Thirteen percent indicated they lived in the USA with no specific state or region listed, and 3% indicated they lived outside the USA. I offered the survey on different platforms, hoping to reach different populations. I wanted to ensure that the collected data represented people from different areas. It is common for individuals who live near one another to have similar life experiences and reactions to certain stimuli like hearing an accent. I wanted to show that the conclusions do not represent a single place.

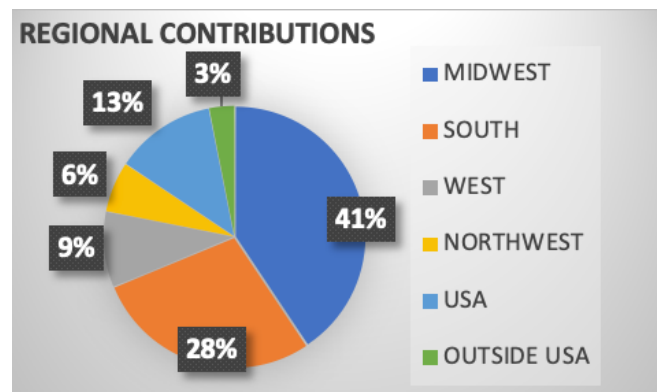


Table 3: Geography

2.4 Distribution of Responses by Gaming Genres

Most gamers play games from several different genres. By analyzing what games are played, one can see that vocalizations in games are often used with similar criteria. Participants' responses are displayed in Table 4:

2. What kind of games do you play?

35 responses

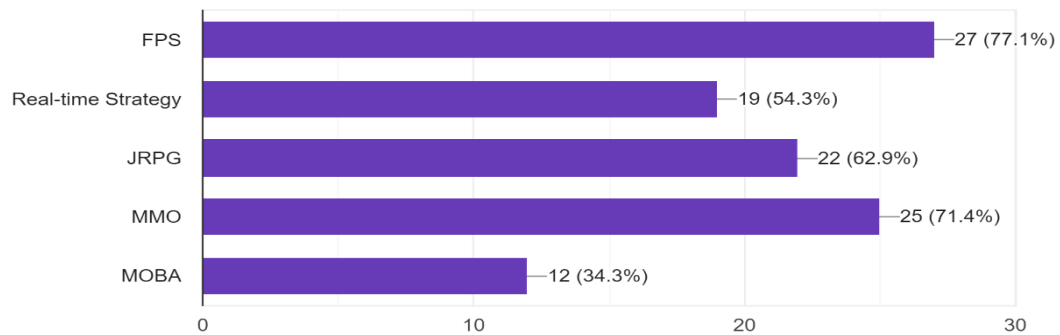


Table 4: Game Genres

Games like EA Sports and sports-type games were not included because they often use sound bites from real-life athletes. Also, most game types associated with the games listed are based on fantasy or not in the real world.

3.0 Various Correlations

In this section, various correlations are considered. Some have to do with characters and the accents attributed to them. Some deal with the characters and their skills.

3.1 Correlations Between Characters and Accents

The data in Tables 5 through 8 display the participants' responses relating to the correlations between characters and the accents assigned to them. Since the graphs are self-explanatory, minimal commentary is required.

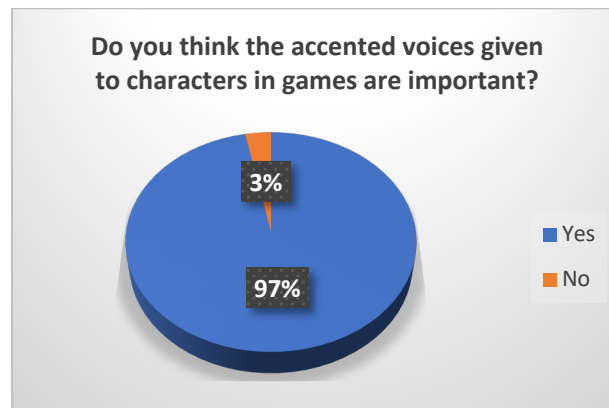


Table 5: Importance of Accents and Characters

An overwhelming majority, 97% of gamers surveyed, agreed that accents given to characters are essential, while 3% did not.

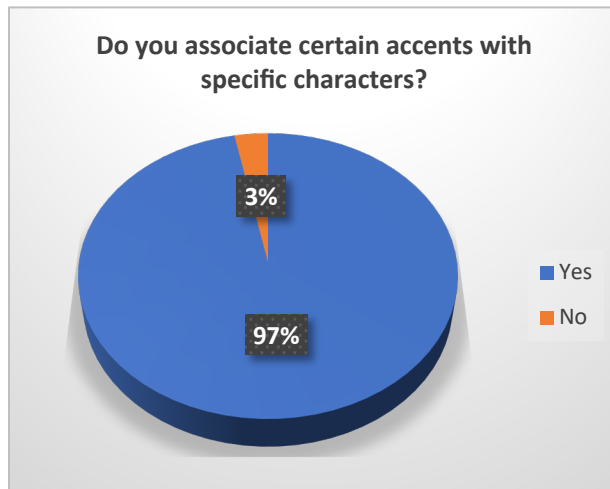


Table 6: Association between Accents and Characters

Again, 97% of gamers surveyed associated accents with specific characters, but 3% did not agree.

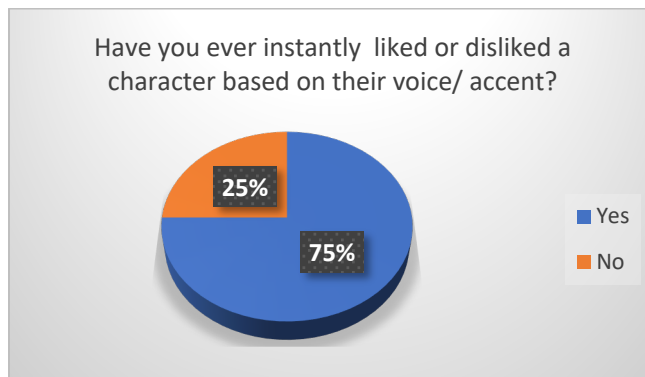


Table 7: Participants' Preferences

To this question, 75% of gamers surveyed liked attributing accents to characters, but 25% did not.

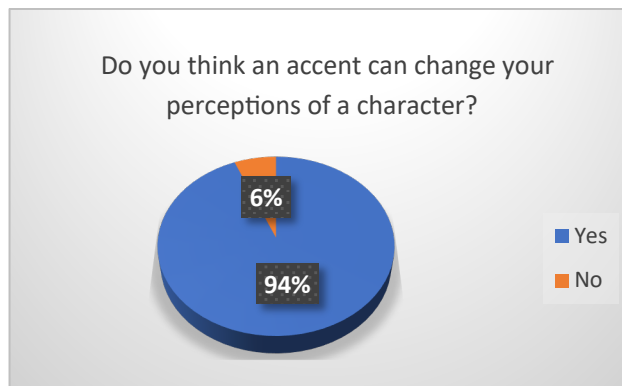


Table 8: Accents and Perception of Characters

Most gamers, 94% said that an accent could change their perceptions of a character, while 6% said that it did not.

4.0 Correlations Between Characters and Skills

In the next section, characters are grouped into groups that best represent their skill set. For instance, Mages and Wizards often cast spells that damage an enemy. At the same time, clerics, priests, and enchanters often use healing spells or protection magic to support the rest of the party. Fighters and Barbarians are both fighters, and their jobs for the party are different. Looking at the responsibilities of each character helps determine which table they fit into. The gamers were asked the following question: “If you had to describe the vocalization for each of the following classes of characters, what would they sound like?”

4.1 Mage/Wizard

Spellcasters have studied the fundamental forces of magic to weave it to their will. Wizards are a class that relies on their intelligence to cast spells, outsmart opponents, and get themselves out of trouble—often shown to be humorless and direct at best and power-hungry at worst.

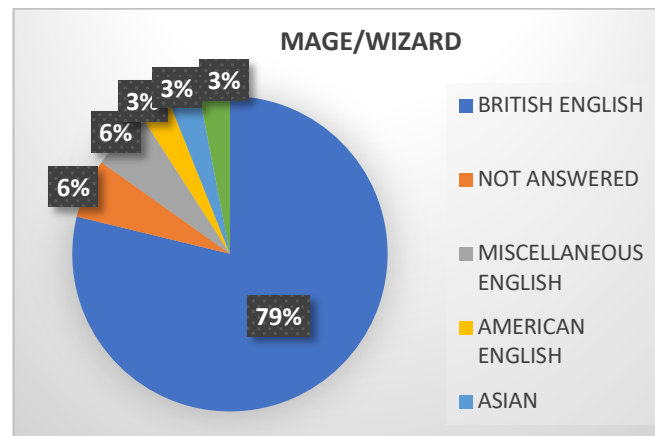


Table 9: Accent Attributions-Mage/Wizard

4.2 Cleric/Priest/Enchanter

They are primarily healers capable of fighting. Most clerics can heal wounds, protect their allies, and sometimes resurrect the dead. Some can summon, manipulate, and banish the undead. They are often steadfast and loyal. They are also known as White Mage/Healers. They have relatively low hit points and will need protection from the rest of the group to do their job. Most have steadfast faith and are often not entirely understood by the rest of the group. Seventy-nine percent said that Mages and Wizards would speak with a British accent. This chart also shows that 6% of games chose Miscellaneous English, while another 6% did not respond to this question. American English, Asian, and French were included in the chart, with 3% given to each response.

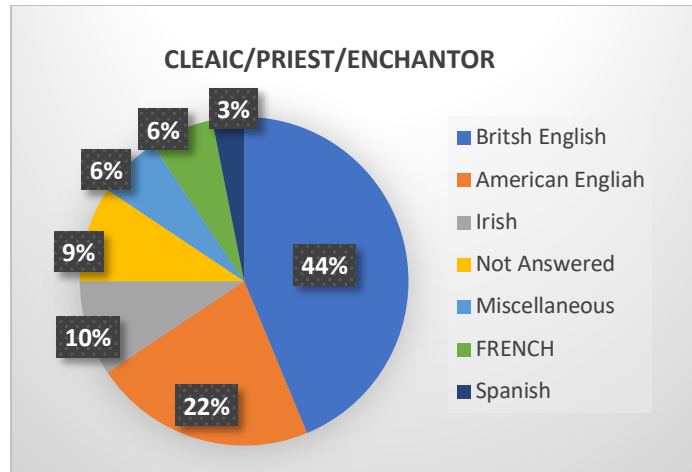


Table 10: Accent Attributions-Clerics

Here, 44% of gamers said these characters would have a British accent, with American English at 22%. Ten percent responded with Irish, while 9% chose not to answer. Six percent went with Miscellaneous, while French and Spanish received 6% and 3% respectively.

4.3 Necromancer/Shadow-Knight

They were employing necromancy spells, a magic that allows them to play with life and death. Many necromancers use spells to prolong their lives and raise the undead by summoning ghosts, animating skeletons, or awakening zombies. This dangerous sort of magic can corrupt the Necromancer. Because necromancers tend to lead their undead into battle, spreading fear and terror, necromancy has gained a reputation for being evil and taboo. The most significant percentage goes to British English with 31%. Next was American English with 19%, followed by German with 13%. Miscellaneous received 10% and 9% for participants who chose not to answer. 6% said Russian, Middle Eastern, Broken English, Irish, and Swedish received 3%.

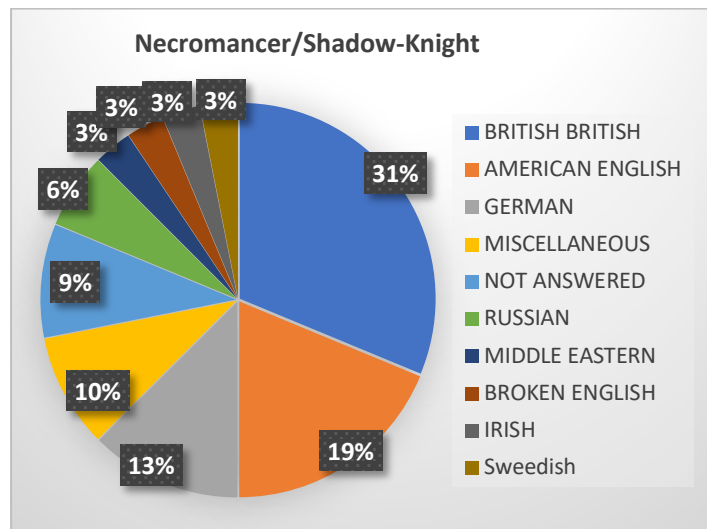


Table 11: Accent Attributions-Necromancer

4.4 Summoners

Summoners are known for summoning magical beasts to fight for the party. Summoners generally have the lowest physical stats and the highest magical stats. Their weapon arsenal varies by game, but most use rods, staves, daggers, and sometimes whips. Usually, summoners and their summons possess some vital story element, such as the summoners of Final Fantasy IX, Final Fantasy X, and Final Fantasy XIV, where the concept of a summoner is focused and expanded further from a mere job class and where their presence and powers significantly change the landscape of the world, they live in. The most significant percentage goes to British English with 41%. 19% chose not to answer this question. 12% said miscellaneous, and 13% American English. 6% reported Broken English while Korean, Middle Eastern and Russian received 3% for each accent.

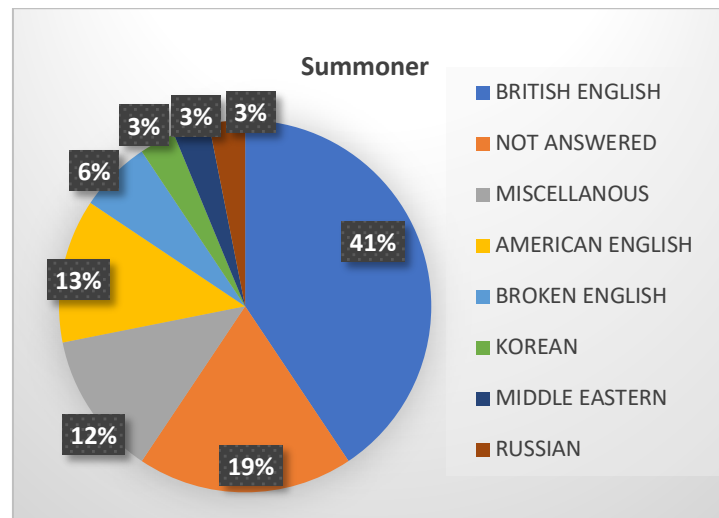


Table 12: Accent Attributions-Summoner

4.5 Fighter/Warrior/Soldier

Often, the Hero, sometimes arrogant and overly self-confident, usually has exciting story arcs where he finds redemption and leads the team to victory. A close combat fighter, strong and fast, charming, often needs a mentor, best friend, and love interest to succeed. Fifty-three percent of gamers said this class of character uses an American accent, while 16% said Scottish. Thirteen percent chose “Miscellaneous,” and 6% of the participants selected “Not Answer.” Finally, Broken English, Irish, Romanian, and British English received 3% of the votes.

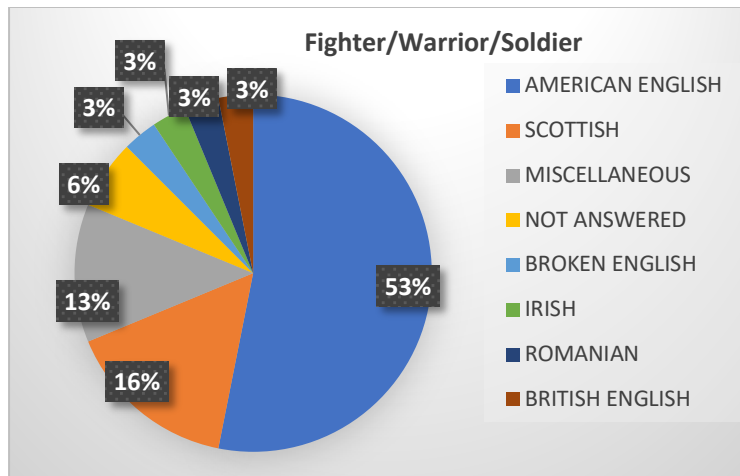


Table 13: Accent Attributions-Fighter/Warrior/Soldier

4.6 Berserker/Barbarian

This character is all about pure power. He is not the most intelligent character on the field. His attacks shake the ground, and the hell beasts always think twice before stepping in his way. These characters are often portrayed as the big ox with a heart of gold. Often, they are the sidekick to the Hero. For this class, there are many answers. Note that not one gamer associated a British accent with this class. Answers were 19% Broken English, 13% Scottish, 10% American English, 10% American English and German, 9% each for Irish, Nordic, Scandinavian, and Miscellaneous, 6% No Answer, and 3% Danish and Hungarian.

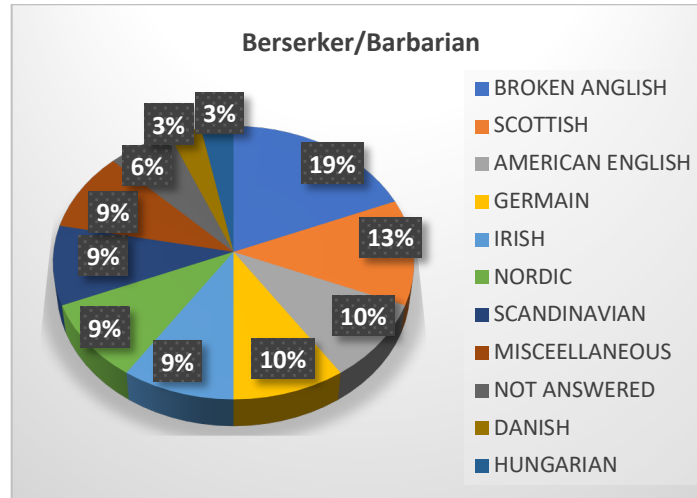


Table 14: Accent Attributions-Barbarian

4.7 Assassin/Ninja

These characters typically combine combat ability with strong stealth skills and specialize in defeating enemies without becoming involved in a protracted melee. Often mysterious and speaking few words, these characters are available to gamers but are not as common as other character classes. These characters, unfortunately, are typically portrayed as stereotypical Asian. Many answers were given for this group of characters, emphasizing Asians and, more specifically, Japanese. Asians got 28%, and the Japanese received 19%. Other answers consisted of 19%

Miscellaneous, 10% American English, 6% both British English and Not Answered, and 3% each for Italian, Middle Eastern English, Russian, and Persian.

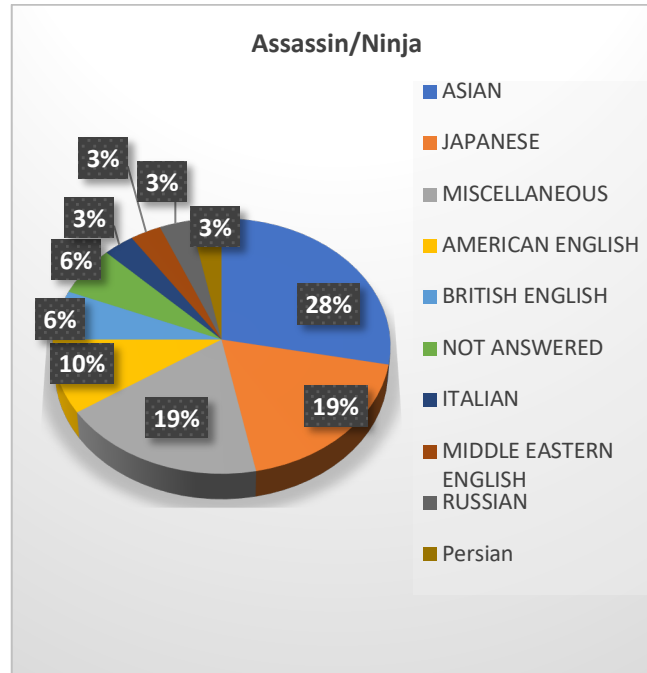


Table 15: Accent Attributions-Assassin

4.8 Archer/Hunter/Ranger

Often, they are not the main characters. They use a wide variety of weapons. This often leaves them somewhat detached from the group. One would not find them close to any battle, preferring to stand out of harm's way. Known for being self-serving and sometimes a loner, these characters can also be thieves due to their nimble hands. American English was associated with this character trait, with 35% of responses. Still, there was a wide range of answers here, including 16% for Miscellaneous English, 13% for Scottish, 9% for British English, Irish, and Not Answered. Australian English, Broken English, and Danish received 3% of the responses.

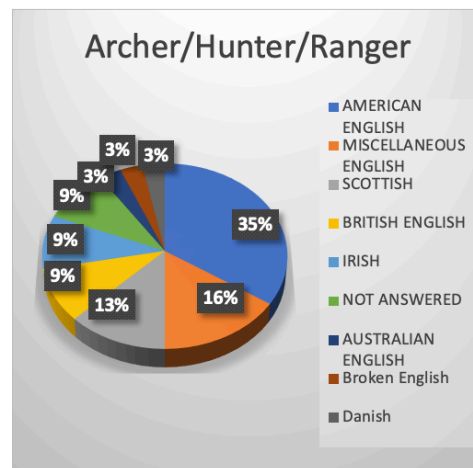


Table 16: Accent Attributions-Archer

4.9 Dancer/Bard

Fun-loving and often jokers and performers, these characters' main job is to support the team. Their ability to sing/dance allows them to cause various effects. The songs/ dances usually boost the party in battle, but some songs target enemies instead. The responses for this class are varied, with most gamers emphasizing American English 28% and British English 25%. Some, 16%, chose Miscellaneous, 10% Scottish, 6% Irish and Not Answered, and 3% each for Belgian, French, and Latin.

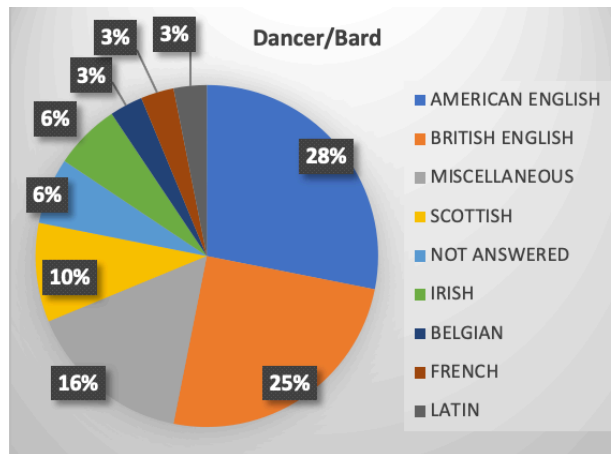


Table 17: Accent Attributions-Dancer

4.10 Dragoon/Lancer

The lancer is a master of polearms. Lancers are agile fighters who strive to balance a flurry of attacks and the weight of their armor. Through wielding polearms, the lancer can build a strong offensive against foes. While it is no easy task to wield a polearm as if it were an extension of one's body, those who master the lancing arts come to be as a raging storm before their enemies, capable of delivering a barrage of devastating thrusts and slashes. Most of the participants, 25%, did not provide any answer. American English received 25% and British English at 19%. Then, we get the widest answer spread on this survey. Four percent associated this accent with African American English, and 3% each for German, Irish, Norwegian, Asian, Scottish, Spanish, Swedish, Welsh, and Broken English.

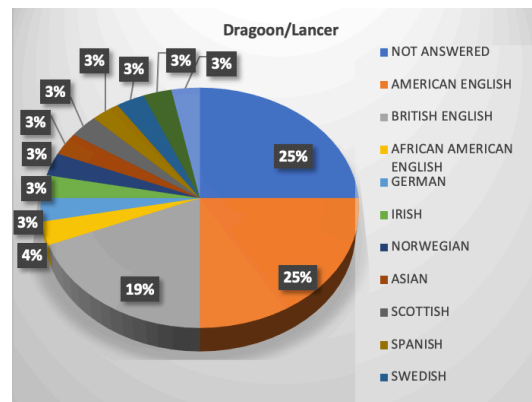


Table 18: Accent Attributions-Dragoon

5.0 Discussions

This section examines subconscious biases by gamers and various stereotypical associations that game designers make between characters and accents.

5.1 Subconscious Accent-Biases

I started by asking gamers: *“Do you think accents given to characters in games are important?”* Only one participant, the oldest among survey takers, did not answer this question. To the question: *“Do you associate certain accents with specific characters?”* He was the only one who said no. Voice acting has become a massive part of Gaming. It has become an intricate part of storytelling. Gamers are creatures of habit; when they find a game or a franchise they like, they will often play it for long periods. When they finish a game, they may replay the game several times. It is not unusual for a gamer to spend 180 to 200 hours on a single JRPG, and they may spend even more time on MMOs and FPS like Call of Duty. So, it is unsurprising that most gamers associate certain accents with a specific character. It is important to note that the same type of accents has often been used to do more than add to the story. Game producers make certain accents associated with a character's class and indirectly with personality traits.

The question, *“Have you ever instantly liked or disliked a character based on their vocals/accents?”* elicited the most significant difference of opinion. This question was intended to assess gamers' perceptions of the characters who speak with specific accents in games and their emotional connotation of specific accents: 75% answered yes, and 25% answered no. There may have been any number of reasons for the discrepancy here. Nevertheless, the best indication has to do with several participants' comments.

IgnobleChomper wrote, "For the most part, these connections do not reflect my actual beliefs on the extent of what vocalizations **could** or should be possible for character archetypes, but my mental map of how video games **have** traditionally chosen to portray these archetypes. In many cases, these existing choices rely on racialized or stereotypical elements I would prefer not to be carried forward."

Here is another response that may explain how gamers felt about this question:

Dis_Wond3r_Woman wrote, "I feel like Stereotypes have influenced my decisions. Please do not hate me. Lol."

These are exciting responses, especially when you pair them up with the responses to the following: *“Do you think an accent can change your perceptions of a character?”* For this one, 94% said yes, and 6% no. By and large, gamers want to be seen as an accepting community. Whether that is true is beside the point. Those few gamers who said no to Question 5 but yes to Question 6 did not want to admit that, on some level, they often use preconceived ideas about accents to instantly not like a character. Often, visual cues go along with the accents, but there is no questioning that accents make a difference to players.

5.2 Characters Associated with British Accent

I separated characters into classes and asked gamers if they had to give these characters an accent and what it would be. To get gamers not to repeat answers about characters based solely on what a character can do, i.e., use magic, fight, perform, I made sure to list the characters that use similar skills apart from each other. I have placed similar characters together for results and analysis so any emerging patterns can be seen. Sometimes, a gamer might have given two or three answers to the same question. For example, they might have said this character uses British English, Irish or Scottish. In these instances, I went with the first answer given. I was looking for the gamer's gut response; often, the first answer is the one they did not have to consider. Also, there were times when someone would say something with an accent. For these times, I listed the gamer's response as miscellaneous. I also added a no-response section for each table.

We will start with the magic users' mages, wizards, clerics, priests, enchanters, summoners, necromancers, and shadow-knights, as displayed in Tables 9, 10, 11, and 12. The consensus was that most of these characters speak British English. While there were other areas where gamers said a British accent would work to some degree, much of the data shows that magic users are given British accents. Even when looking at less popular characters like the Necromancer and the Shadow-knight, with 31% saying British English and 22% American English, it still puts them into the grade of British spell casters. From the player's point of view, the intelligent, bookish, often humorless mage speaks with a proper British accent.

5.3 Characters Associated with American Accent

Next, we have Fighters, Warriors, and Soldiers; see Table 13. Fifty-two percent of gamers associated them with American English. This is unsurprising, considering that almost everyone in this survey was American. In many games, the Fighter is the Hero, and the best way to have gamers be invested in a character that they are playing is to make them sound familiar. Since almost all of the gamers who filled out the survey were Americans and played games translated into English for an American demographic, it makes sense that the Hero of the game would speak American English. Over time, there has been an increasing number of women who play video games. However, men between 18 and 35 are still the prominent target group. Game designers want their heroes to reflect the players. In America, that would mean the hero fighter speaks American English.

5.4 Characters Associated with Broken English

If Mages are perceived as intelligent, then there would be a class of characters seen as unintelligent, might I say dumb. Enter the Berserker or the Barbarian, commonly known as the Tank. They are referred to in Table 14. The most significant percentage of answers to this association is 20%. Responders correlated these characters with Broken English. That is not a huge number, but we find a similar common denominator when looking at the accents that others used to describe this class. Danish, Nordic, Scandinavian, German, and Hungarian were listed. So far as the gamer is concerned, these characters speak English, but what was different about this category was that the gamers felt the need to add words like guttural, lower class, fierce, and booming to their description. For instance, the German accent was described as guttural. It must also be noted that not one person said British English. So, while there may be different ideas about the exact accent used, the accent is often thought of as broken or a non-standardized form of English.

Validus24 said, "The more intellectual the class/character, the more upper-class the accent, and upper-class English accents will usually be cast for those characters. The more combat-oriented classes will have gruffer voices and less "intellectual" accents, so American and lower/working-class English accents."

5.5 Characters Associated with Asian Accented English

Next are the Assassin and Ninja classes described in Table 15. I will start with the Assassin Ninja. I am sure it is not surprising that 28% said Japanese and 22% said Asian. So basically, 50% of gamers followed the stereotype on this one. One gamer even said they hated to say it, but it was "stereotypical" Asian. This cast of character archetype is very familiar on TV and in movies, so it is easy to see why video games have continued using it. Although I am not sure why some gamers associated this character with Russian, I surmise why it was associated with Italian, Persian, American English, British English, and Middle Eastern English. There is a popular game called Assassins Creed that has 12 installments. The series starts in the Holy Land during the Crusades; other locations include Italy, Rome, and New York. Depending on which assassin is, the gamer's favorite may have contributed to what accent they associated with this character class.

5.6 Characters Associated with Miscellaneous Accents

Archer, Hunter, Ranger, Dancer, and Bard are discussed in Tables 16 and 17. We got a mixed bag of answers on this one. One of the reasons for this is that these characters are often relatively removed from the main characters, unlike magic users and tanks. Most of this class had such a combination of American English and British English, but quite a few people responded with "Miscellaneous." It may be that even when these characters are present, they typically do not have much to say.

5.7 Characters Associated with Indeterminate Accent

Finally, there is Dragoon/Lancer. This one elicited a wide variety of answers. What stood out the most was that even though people were giving responses, those responses were often followed with "I am not sure what this is." For many of the answers given, the next logical question that needs to be asked is why the participants chose to answer these questions the way they did. Further research needs to be conducted to better understand the answers to this question. However, I believe that for this cast of characters, there is no typical accent that survey takers associate with them.

6.0 Summary

I started this project to see if there was a consensus among Video Gamers on using accents in Gaming. As the data indicates, some correlations exist. Not only are accents essential to storytelling, but they are also often used repeatedly to provide information about character traits. This information shows that gamers recognize that certain accents are used as symbols of character classes: magic users often have British accents, Fighters are often the Hero and have American accents, and Barbarians do not speak any form of standardized English.

Lippi-Green (2012) studied how media, Disney cartoons, help teach children to discriminate by manipulatively using accents. Considering the information discussed in this paper, it is apparent that video game designers are aware of such correlations and use them when designing games. Many games we play in the US are designed and produced in Japan. This means they need to be translated into English to be played here. There appears to be an understanding

that certain characters need to sound a specific way in the translation process. Most interesting is that many of the gamers had no problem acknowledging the correlations uncovered in the survey. I have listed some of the comments below.

Pumpkin_Noodle wrote: "I chose the most stereotypical answer for each class. I would love to see more Indian, African, Black American, Southeast Asian, and Arabic characters with associated accents. Gaming is a white space with some East Asian flair."

Hamsancastle said: "These all sound very white to me in my head, and I fear these characters are critically lacking in diversity."

Audio baby/DemÃ, n Shade/hillbillieeilish noted: "As a player, a gamer, and a storyteller, I have learned to de-sociate myself from English/European standards, but as a gamer, many of these persist. I chose to rank in terms of class expectations. Still, the reality is that most of the accents I interpret are English. I wish Western European fantasy, storytelling, and myth methods were not the standard."

6.1 Limitations and Future Research

There is a need for further research into the area of accent use in video gaming. Though I obtained a fair amount of information from this survey, questions still need to be answered. It would be insightful to have an open dialogue with gamers to discuss if they know where their preconceived ideas about accents come from. Also, there appears to be a strong connection between other forms of media and video games. For example, one survey taker commented that many of their responses were based on movies and TV.

This research opens the door to further positive ethnic representation in video games. It only looked at the linguistic choices for character classes. Still, it did not touch on the logistic representation of people of color or discuss the need for better representation of all races. Nowhere is it written that a Mage cannot be Mexican, a Barbarian cannot speak British English, and a Hero cannot speak non-standardized English. What is evident is that video game companies still assign accents to characters based on stereotypical ideas to influence gamers. Some of these are the same stereotypes gamers may have learned as children. Furthermore, it does not look like the gaming industry plans to stop anytime soon.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Camille McDermott was an undergraduate student at St. Catherine University, majoring in English with an emphasis on Linguistics. She has focused on sociolinguistics in her studies and is currently involved in research that analyses the effect of online communications on perceptions of accent bias and stereotypes. She is pursuing a graduate degree in English at Illinois State University. She can be reached at clmcdermott511@gmail.com.

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