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Gaming Slang Terms in Russian Online Media: A Case Study of News Articles

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Abstract. The goal of this study is to identify gaming slang terms in the news articles of highly rated Russian media. Three online newspapers of various types were used as an empirical material: *Kommersant* (the first private business newspaper in Russia), RBC (a socio-political analytical newspaper) and *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* (agency of the Russian Federation government). With help of the content analysis of the media texts, all cases of using the slang gaming terms such as "achievement", "noob", "easter eggs" etc. have been discovered and described. The results of the study show that over the past five years the popularity of the gaming terms usage in the media has been growing; this increase can be described as a linear progressive growth: gaming slang is becoming an integral part of the Runet online resources and is gradually entering common vocabulary. It can be assumed that with the increase in the number of media managers from the generation of digital natives and their transition to the category of "decision makers", the growth of gaming slang terms in online media will become exponential.

Keywords: gaming terms, Russian online media, generation Z, media consumption, anglicisms

Анализ употребления игровых сленговых терминов в новостных статьях российских онлайн-СМИ

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Аннотация. Цель исследования – выявление игровых сленговых терминов в новостных статьях рейтинговых российских СМИ. В качестве эмпирического материала использовались три онлайн-издания различной направленности: «Коммерсант» (первое частное деловое издание в России), «РБК» (общественно-политическая аналитическая газета) и «Российская газета» (орган Правительства Российской Федерации). С помощью контент-анализа в новостных медиатекстах были обнаружены и описаны все случаи применения сленговых игровых терминов «ачивка», «нуб», «пасхалка» и др. Результаты исследования показывают, что за последние пять лет популярность использования игровых терминов в СМИ растет, это приращение может быть описано как линейный поступательный рост: геймерский сленг становится составной частью ресурсов Рунета и постепенно входит в общеупотребительную лексику. Можно предположить, что с увеличением количества медиаменеджеров из поколения цифровых аборигенов и переходом их в категорию «принимающих решения», рост игровых сленговых терминов в онлайн-медиа станет экспоненциальным.

Ключевые слова: игровой сленг, российские СМИ, поколение Z, медиапотребление, англицизмы

Game slang in the modern communication space

Modern slang resembles a living organism. It is in a constant process of change and renewal. Of course, young people have a great influence in providing trends in the modern communication space. They often try to set themselves against the world of adults.

Thanks to the rapid development of the gaming industry and the popularity of eSports disciplines, Generation Z often uses game terms in daily communication. Usually, online games take place in real time, where players interact with each other by not only using characters, but also using voice or text chat. Very often, the team in the game may include gamers from different countries. Therefore,

game slang is an indispensable communication tool for improving mutual understanding between players.

Game slang can be divided into two categories – global and local. Global slang is characterized by a vocabulary that is used in all games regardless of country. And local slang is more typical for specific gaming communities [1]. In the context of our research, we focused mainly on the category of global slang. Game Communications Laboratory of the RUDN University conducted a survey of students and gamers in order to identify the most popular game terms that are often used in everyday speech. According to the survey results, the most common game terms were: noob, cheater, achievement, Easter egg, PvP, skill, random, afk, damage, etc. In most cases, gamer slang consists of anglicisms. The purpose of this study is to examine the dynamics of the occurrence of game terminology in the vocabulary of Russian Internet media. Preliminary monitoring of online publications has shown that only some of them can be met in the news materials. The main game terms which are used: noob, cheater, achievement, Easter egg and skill. Below, we will review each of them in more detail.

Noob – an inexperienced or worst-performing player, often used as a mockery.

Cheater – is a game scammer, who uses special codes to gain superiority in the game. Usually, game developers can block a rogue's account for a long period of time when they receive complaints from players, sometimes even without the right to return.

In the non-gaming communication space, young people often use the concept of "cheating" in a positive sense. If, for example, a person manages to find a non-standard way out of a situation or succeed in a short time, then young people can call him a "cheater" as a compliment.

Achievement – an achievement is a special bonus in the game. In the virtual game world some bonuses can be given to players with great efforts or depend on luck. Such achievements are usually a matter of pride for the player and an opportunity to stand out from other users.

Skill – a skill (usually combat). Also, the concept of "skill" can be interpreted, as the ability to play in general. Young people often use the term skill in the context of the level of mastery in a particular area.

Easter egg – an Easter egg is called a certain not quite obvious message in a computer game. The difference between Easter eggs and the usual game secret is that it does not fit into the general concept of the narrative, it is difficult to find it, attention and excellent skills are required to complete the game. The term is derived from "Easter egg" and is associated with the custom of hiding a piece of food during the Easter meal. The finder is entitled to a sweet gift.

Game terms in the vocabulary of Russian online media

Both in modern national languages and in the language of mass media, researchers note two of the most distinctive processes: vulgarization of literary

and colloquial speech, and the strengthening of the process of borrowing foreign words. While the social relations of the global society develop, the media discourse is filled with new socially colored meanings. Its evolutionary development leads to the creation of the unified communicative space [2].

The young and specific eSports industry is growing exponentially. It provides many trends of interaction with the audience in modern media. The eSports arena is highly competitive within the media market. The intensive growth of the Russian and the global audience, as well as interest from major sponsors and brands, contribute to the emergence and development of eSports journalism [3]. ESports is a huge media platform that allows you to earn money on the favorite entertainment of millions of people – computer games [4]. According to Newzoo statics, the audience of eSports competitions will grow to 728.8 million people in 2021. The global trend of increasing popularity of the eSports market also affects the work of online media.

Over the past few years, the first publications with the use of game slang began to appear in the materials of Russian online publications. By the way, in a global sense, the share of the Russian segment in of the eSports market is not significant at the moment, but it is one of the fastest growing in the world. According to the researchers, the Russian eSports audience will reach 20 million viewers by 2023. For our research, it is interesting to analyze the process of entering game terms into the content of Russian media over the past 5 years. We selected for content analysis the influential Russian online media such as "Kommersant", "RBC", and "Rossiyskaya Gazeta (Russian Newspaper)".

Analysis of use of game terms in news articles in "Kommersant"

For the period from 2017 to 2021 in the publications of "Kommersant" the most common game terms are "Easter egg" and "achievement". So, in the news publications of on the portal (2017–2020) were found and analyzed journalistic materials with the game term "Easter egg".

For the first time, the term was used for the first time in the article "Developers played too hard: How the image of the murdered ambassador got into a computer game" (Kommersant FM). The article provides the following explanation of Easter eggs: `Developers often insert some references to real-life or other works of art, both gaming and literary, into their games. So players can receive a recognition effect or just have fun (6.10.2017). It was about the Russian artist Andrey Karlov, who was killed in Turkey. His image appeared in one of the episodes of the video game based on the comics about Batman.

Exactly one month later, Ogonyok, which is produced under the Kommersant`s brand, published an article entitled "The Beginning of the Game: "Ogonyok" about how the computer game industry changed the world" (6.11.2017), in which the author tells about the history of the formation of video games. This is the context in which the term Easter egg appears and is interpreted:

"unlike movies, where everyone knows actors or directors, for a long time the names of computer game developers were classified and fell under the concept of trade secrets. So it was in *Adventure* that the creator first broke this rule: he left the Easter egg in a secret room, where the player could read his name".

During the following year there were published two materials with this game term.

The online newspaper Kommersant published a review titled "Spielberg went back to the future" (29.03.2018). It is dedicated to the news about Steven Spielberg film "Ready player one". This is a film adaptation of the cult science fiction novel by Ernest Kline. The film is about a global video game that immerses the population of Earth in flight from the apocalyptic reality of 2045. In the story, the main character is game designer James Holliday. The author of the article writes tar the great manipulator performed by Mark Rylance. The review uses two words from the slang of computer enthusiasts without explanation. Geek – a sociable enthusiast, a specialist innovator mainly in the field of high technologies. Nerd – a closed intellectual, theorist, fond of something highly specialized and incomprehensible to most. Thanks to popularity of IT culture these words has come into online newspaper's vocabulary. The American television sitcom "The Big Bang Theory" (launched in 2007) fixed words "geek" and "nerd" in the vocabulary of generations Y and Z.

In 2019 the journalists of Kommersant didn't mention "Easter egg" in their news articles. In 2020, the authors wrote five materials using "Easter egg" in usual context.

By the end of March 2021, three materials have already appeared on the Kommersant portal that uses the game term "Easter egg".

As for the game term "achievement" it is not found in the publications until 2021. In the period from February 9 to February 10, three materials are published mentioning "achievement". We found an article from Kommersant FM columnist Alexander Levy (09.02.2021) in which he talks about the game *"Gebne"* popularizing legal literacy. The Team 29 Union of Lawyers and Journalists , which chose the name based on the article number of the Constitution, which guarantees everyone freedom of thought and speech, as well as the right to search, receive and disseminate information, decided to popularize legal literacy using a mobile game "Gebnya", the article says. The player will have to pass stress tests and test themselves in virtual communication with law enforcement agencies. At the end of each level, the user will receive statistics on correct and incorrect answers, and you can also get stamps, such as a mark on specific achievements. In this case, the concept of "achievement" is used in its native context.

In the publication dedicated to the third hearing in the case of politician Alexey Navalny on defamation of a veteran (16.02.2021), two gamer terms can be found: "noob" and "cheater". In the summer of 2020, the opposition leader called participants in support of amendments to the Constitution "corrupt lackeys". Among the participants of the video was a veteran of the Great Patriotic War Ignat Artemenko. For insulting a veteran, the state prosecution requested a fine of 950

thousand rubles. "A pensioner can take offense at the word 'lackey', and a student-at the word 'cheater'. Would there be a criminal case if Navalny called the participants in the filming noobs and cheaters?" – asks Navalny's lawyer Vadim Kobzev during the meeting. In the context of his statement, Kobzev made a bet, that in the framework of communication between the digital generation, the game world terms "noob" and "cheater", although are mocking or offensive but are not taken seriously.

Analysis of usage game terms in news articles of RBC

Among the materials of the online publications "RBC" for the period from 2017 to 2021, two gaming terms are most often found: "achievement" and "skill".

Just two or three years ago the gaming audience was interesting only to those who are connected with games-manufacturers of computers, consoles and energy drinks. Now almost all companies want to work with them from banks and film studios to courier services. Now gamers are perceived as a solvent, demanding, but also loyal audience (10.10.2019), – says the article of the online publication "RBC". Within the framework of the article, the concept of "achievements" is used as a PR-tool to attract a gaming audience: *"...in 2019 Pringels became the part of the Warface online shooter for the first War FaceTime: players could complete special tasks and receive branded 'achievements'...".*

Another example of the usage the game term can be found in the article devoted to the topic of approval Council of the Federation of the Russian Federation of the law that will allow individuals to be recognized as foreign agents (25.11.2019). In this case, one of the bloggers Oleg Makarenko (Fritz Morgen blog) in his commentary for the publication uses the term "achievement" in the context of the attitude of Western bloggers to the new law: *"... for them, the opportunity to receive an 'achievement' (award – ed.) 'victims of the regime'...".* The blogger believes that the deputies themselves introduce a badge of distinction for foreign agents, working on Russian territory.

In the period from 2017 to 2021, 27 materials were published with the mention of the Anglicism "skill" on the RBC website. Let's look at some publications using the concept of "skill" in game meaning.

The founders of TikTok house are going to grew up new stars, – reports the online publication "RBC" (11.03.21). Denis Kozminykh (founder of the Grand House of bloggers) in his comments that the founders intend to invest $300 300–500 000 thousand. The management program will help *to upgrade the skills* of the future TikTok star: image, media activations, creation of a YouTube-channel, its promotion and production, promotion in Instagram. In this case, there are two game terms "pump up" and "skills" present. Denis Kozminykh uses game terms in their direct meaning. Usually in computer games, for the growth and development of a computer character you need to pass levels, that is, "pump up" and thereby get additional skills ("skills") or improve existing ones.

The article for January 29, 2021, dedicated to graduates of the international accelerator Sber500, mentions the game term "skill" twice. In the first case, when it comes to the importance of the team's work for the development of a startup: *"...you need to find 'yourself' in spirit and 'others' in skills".* And in the second case, when a graduate of the Sber500 accelerator recommends sticking to like-minded people and pumping skills in the accelerator. In this case, the game term "skill" retains its primary meaning.

Analysis of usage of game terms in news articles of Russian Newspaper

Among the publications of Russian Newspaper during 2017 to 2021, there are two game terms which are mostly found – "Easter egg" and "skill".

"The new Lexus concept decided to play a guess in game," says the title of an article in the online publication of Rossiyskaya Gazeta (10.10.2019). As part of the premiere of the new *Lexus concept* at the 46th Tokyo Motor Show, the company decided to hide a surprise in the release one of the new cars. If you zoom the image published by Lexus, you can see the so-called "Easter egg" – the silhouette of a new hatchback, – the publication reports. In this case, the gamer term "Easter egg" most successfully conveys the essence of the idea of a PR-company.

In the news feed (18.02.2020) we found the following message: "Alexander Safronov, a resident of Yekaterinburg, found an unusual way to propose to his girlfriend. He asked for the help developers of the game 'Metro: Exodus'. The creators hidden a surprise to his future wife in one of the game locations. The Easter egg appears in the game with the inscription 'Fanny, be my wife' ".

Russian Newspaper also mentions "Easter egg" in an article dedicated to the presentation of new Apple products Apple (12.09.2019). The company published a video on the YouTube video hosting service with a brief retelling of the main announcements of the event. In this video "Easter egg" was hidden. If you have time to pause the video, you can see that the error code is marked as 09102019, which refers to the date of the presentation. Then it is written that it would be nice to hide the secret in this place for hardcore Apple fans. Next, a set of binary code is printed, in which an ironic message is encrypted: *"So, did you take the time to decipher this? We love you".*

Let's look at a couple of examples of using the game term "skill". We find in the news publication for 25.03.2020: "*According to the France Press agency, the popularity of online games in the world has increased due to COVID-19. Due to the quarantine, the audience again returned to the active use of personal computers and consoles, instead of 'pumping skills' in a mobile phone on the go".*

In February 2021, an article was published that is particularly interesting in the context of the study. Member of the Guild of Linguists-Experts, Candidate of Philological Sciences Elena Kara-Murza commented on the situation with the ban on borrowed words on television. The comment was made in connection with the

publication of a list of words prohibited for use on the Match-TV channel. The expert believes that the contamination of the Russian language with foreign words can only be discussed when people do not understand each other. The nature of language does not accept limitations, as an ever-evolving category. *"I don't see the point in banning the word 'skills'. This is a luxurious example of mastering-in Russian, for example, there are jeans. A native speaker of the Russian language forms the usual ending of a plural noun...,"* – notes Elena Kara-Murza. The term "skills" is actively used in the speech of gamers, the philologist comments.

Conclusion

Nowadays, modern communication space is developing and transforming daily. Generation Z plays a vital role in providing new trends in a digital communication system and beyond. Slang is actively used among the youth, as a way to hide the meaning of what is said from people around them. According to statistics, the average age of an ordinary gamer is 23 years. It follows that the language of gamers is a component of youth slang [5].

If earlier the gaming audience was not taken seriously, now it is important, not only for companies, but also as consumers of information. As part of the study, we set ourselves the task to analyze the usage of gaming terms in the vocabulary of Russian online publications. At the moment, there are only few studies, which examine media materials that use game approaches [6–9]. The results of the content analysis showed, that the dynamics of the appearance game terms in online news has increased significantly over the past 5 years. Such influential online media, as Kommersant, RBC and Russian newspaper, despite their business status, are already introducing the use of game slang in their materials. Of course, this approach provides an opportunity to attract the attention of digital generation Z in the consumption of news content.

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