GÖTEBORGS UNIVERSITET

INSTITUTIONEN FÖR
SPRÅK OCH LITTERATURER

“NO ETO NE YUZABEL’NO”

An Analysis of Code-Switching Among Russian-Speaking Gamers

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Essay/Degree Project:	15 hp
Program or/and course:	SIK230
Level:	First cycle/Second cycle
Term/year:	Vt2025
Supervisor:	Anna Hjalmarsson
Examiner:	Thomas Rosén
Report nr:	xx (not to be filled)

Abstract

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Abstract: The Internet continues to provide fertile ground for language contact, and via language contact, new varieties arise, often containing elements from several other languages. This thesis examines the language of Russian-speaking gamers using code-switching as a theoretical foundation. By both quantitative and qualitative analysis of chat conversations on the streaming platform Twitch, where streamers play and commentate the video game *Age of Empires II*, the results of this thesis demonstrate ways in which English words are adopted by Russian-speakers. Code-switching is discussed as an umbrella term, allowing a wide variety of words to be analysed. The thesis discusses code-switches from a grammatical perspective, and shows that code-switching can occur in different parts of speech. Motivations for code-switching are complex, but the results indicate that linguistic precision is not the driving factor in this context. The thesis suggests that more research can be done on the topic of Russian-English code-switching, and this thesis can be seen as a stepping stone on the way to further clarity.

Keywords: Code-switching, Slang, Russian language, English Language, Video Games, *Age of Empires*, Internet Language, Twitch, Chat messages

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1. Introduction

Languages are in constant change and evolution. An important aspect of this evolution of language has always been contact with other varieties. Today, in a globalized world, the contact between different languages is more frequent than ever. The internet and social media let people from all over the world get in touch with each other to create new subcultures and communities, which in turn generates new ways of communication and new speech communities. Millions of people meet online to discuss in forums, engage on social media or comment on videos, participating in conversation with people and languages of great variety. The role of English as an online lingua franca seems to be stable, and the English language also seeps through to other mainly monolingual, non-English speaking online communities, providing them with new words as loans, slang or calques (Šabec, 2009).

A subculture that has attracted the attention of linguists and that is often developing new ways of communication is the video gaming community. Online language has been described as characterized by innovativeness in word formation, making use of abbreviations, acronyms and non-linguistic representations such as images or emoticons (Šabec, 2009). Game slang, or gamer slang, can be said to be a continuation building on already existing internet slang, and communities usually evolve around particular games. Slang is often interpreted as a way of showing in-group belonging, and gamer slang is no exception. Gamer slang has also, however, been argued to express a higher degree of emotion than so called "general" slang. Gamer slang can be an effect of linguistic economy, or be employed in an effort to be more accurate, particularly in cases where the game is in one language and the linguistic community is in another (Ageeva & Gimadiyeva, 2022). Russian internet language or gamer slang has been compiled into lexicons (Vorontsova & Aldukhov, 2023) (Korolchuk & Akhanova, 2016), but these studies have mainly perceived these varieties of speech as slang.

In this study, the language of a Russian speaking online community will be examined using a theory of code-switching as an analytical model for interpreting and explaining variations from standard language, and in particular variations moving towards English. Code-switching[1]

[1] Sometimes also written as "code switching" or "codeswitching", authors do not agree on the correct terminology. In this paper, unless directly quoting an author with a different preference, the phenomenon will be written as "code-switching".

studies the alternation of codes, that is, languages, dialects or other variations among speakers in one and the same setting. Code-switching as a phenomenon has been studied extensively, and has traditionally been approached from three different points of view: sociolinguistic, psycholinguistic or grammatical (Albirini, 2016). This study will be grammatical, but some of the social functions of code-switching will be discussed. For this study, a broad definition of code-switching, relying on a definition proposed by Gardner-Chloros (2009) will be employed, allowing several different kinds of variation to enter the data. The material will be taken from chat logs connected to video streams from the streaming platform Twitch, with videos showing the video game *Age of Empires 2*. Around this game, a terminology has evolved, and speech communities based on different languages has formed.

This study will attempt to describe the code-switching in this particular speech community by examining the type of words that are code-switched. Using a broad definition of code-switching, the words, phrases or sentences that are found to be code-switched will be further divided into subcategories, which will allow both quantitative and qualitative analysis. The fact that Russian language uses the Cyrillic alphabet, and English uses the Latin alphabet might impact the way the speakers, or as in this case, writers, code-switch. By analysing what grammatical constituents are used to form new words, and from what language they are taken, this study may also provide additional insight on how new words are transferred into Russian, and into code-switching from a grammatical perspective.

2. Research questions

This thesis aims to investigate how contact between Russian and English language in informal written conversation can affect code-switching among the speakers. The speakers in this study will be Russian speakers in a Russian language context, but the topic of discussion is an English language video game. The material will be comprised of collections of written chat messages on Twitch streams of the computer game *Age of Empires 2: Definitive Edition*.

The following questions will guide the investigation:

1. What kinds of words are switched? How frequent is code-switching in this particular setting?
2. How are these words adapted to synchronize with the Russian Cyrillic alphabet, and how are they inserted into the Russian morphological and grammatical system?

The first question will be answered by performing a quantitative analysis of the written sources drafted from the chat forums. This will allow an examination to see how frequently the speakers switch from Russian to English using statistics withdrawn from the corpora. A qualitative analysis of the material may also help answering what word classes are involved in the code-switches, and what kind of words or linguistical units are more likely to be code-switched.

The second question focusses on how English words are transferred into Russian. Since the two languages use different alphabets, investigating how the speakers choose to handle the orthography may reveal interesting results about Russian language in a dynamic online environment. An analysis of how the Russian system of verb conjugations and case endings for nouns and adjectives affect the English words used by Russian speakers will also shed light on how Russian language speakers adopt new words, and can contribute to an explanation of what impairs the process of grammaticalization of new words.

3. Background

3.1 Code-switching

Code-switching is a sociolinguistic phenomenon which has been studied extensively by researchers, yet there are still various ways of defining it. In general, it refers to a situation where a speaker uses two or several languages or dialects, so called varieties, in one situation or sentence, but as will be shown further on in this thesis, the term is rather ambiguous and there are several similar and/or overlapping labels for this phenomenon. The term was supposedly first used by the linguist Hans Vogt in his article "*Language Contacts*" in 1954, but the phenomenon had been studied even before the term code-switching was introduced (Nilep, 2006).

Early studies of code-switching saw switching as a result of insufficient proficiency in a language, or gaps in the lexicon. It was not until the 1960s and early 1970s that code-switching as a discipline in sociolinguistic research took off, when researchers started to view code-switching as a normal part of human language, and something worth studying in and of itself. Since then, the field has become a highly popular branch for sociolinguists, and there are thousands of studies published on code-switching (Gardner-Chloros, 2009).

In the 1970's and 80's, the variationist approach was popular among linguists. It tried to formulate rules according to different examples of constraints, which supposedly could not be broken. When examples that did indeed break these so-called rules were found, it was explained by using the blurry lines of code-switching, and the examples of rule-breaking were deemed in fact not real code-switching, but something else. The variationist approach was, however, severely undermined by these rule-breakers as the research on code-switching expanded (Gardner-Chloros, 2009).

Later in the 1980's a new approach gained popularity, that of the Matrix Language Frame, or MLF. This model proposed that the grammar of an utterance is hierarchical and governed by a dominant language, the frame language, which sets the rules for the utterance. Another language, a so-called embedded language, may then be inserted into the matrix of the frame language. It is worth noting that according to this model, an utterance is not considered to be made in the matrix language, rather, it is made in a mixed variety to which the matrix language provides the grammatical framework. While it is true that this model is applicable for so-called

intrasentential code-switching where individual words from a second language are inserted, the situation becomes more unclear in more complex structures. When a sentence contains grammar from two languages, or in a case of intersentential code-switching where speakers are alternating back and forth between different codes in between the sentences, determining the matrix language becomes a complicated task (Gardner-Chloros, 2009).

The term code-switching itself can be rather misleading, as it was initially taken from the field of communication technology where it refers to something completely different than what code-switching means in linguistics. "Codes" in linguistics refers to different languages, dialects, styles or in general, ways of speaking, and is usually used as a broad term. "Switching" refers to the process of alternating one's way of speaking between these different "codes" (Gardner-Chloros, 2009). Furthermore, there are several similar terms describing similar phenomena. Gardner-Chloros (2009) mentions, among others, code-mixing, alternation and transversion. In her book she describes how there are different applications of the terms, and how code-switching can be used as an umbrella term, covering multiple types of language mixing or switching. Code-switching may be seen as a point on a scale, where a word or phrase starts as a form of code-switching, but as it becomes more normalised in the language it shifts into a borrowing, before becoming completely integrated into a language.

A prerequisite for successful code-switching is contact between two codes, and speakers familiar with both. Some see it as a marker of social change, while others perceive code-switching as a marker of stable bilingualism in a society. Code-switching does not seem to be something that causes or accelerates language change, rather, it is an aspect of it (Gardner-Chloros, 2009). Sociolinguists have tended to focus on code-switching as a feature of spoken language, but there are also historical examples of code-switching in writing. Gardner-Chloros (2009) mentions how Cicero wrote in both Greek and Latin in his letters, and refers to writers such as Leo Tolstoy, who lets his characters speak both Russian and French to each other. Written code-switching is also prevalent in advertising, often mixing the local language with English.

The study of code-switching has traditionally been separated into three different approaches: grammatical, sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic. Grammatical studies aim to reveal the underlying principles of code-switching, and to determine how morphology and syntax affect bilingualism and language alternation. This approach is concerned with the question "how?". How does code-switching become realized? The sociolinguistic approach investigates the

function and meaning of code-switching in a societal context. It is more about the question "why?" than about "how?". The third approach, the psycholinguistic, focusses on the cognitive aspects of code-switching, aiming to explain the mechanisms in the brain involved in code-switching (Albirini, 2016). For the present study, the grammatical and sociolinguistic approaches will be of greater relevance.

Systematic study of code-switching from a grammatical point of view has revealed that code-switching is not a phenomenon that occurs randomly in a sentence. Although examples of code-switching can be found in every grammatical position, there seems to be some underlying rules, or norms, that regulate what words are more likely to be switched. The source of these rules is, however, not clear, and there are different approaches to the grammar of code-switching (Gardner-Chloros, 2009).

Gardner-Chloros (2009, p.114) writes that it may prove difficult to reveal an underlying grammar or universal rules for code-switching, but that "by examining the techniques which code-switchers employ, we may indeed come across some universal strategies". The aim of this study is to contribute to a description of code-switching between English and Russian, and to exemplify switches typical for this language pair.

There are several theories on the reasons why speakers code-switch, and there are also variations in the kind of code-switching performed by different kinds of speakers. From a sociolinguistic perspective, it has been described as a way to signal group membership, mark identity and show social solidarity, among others (Albirini, 2016). Age seems to affect the way speakers code-switch, and relationships between languages, both linguistical closeness and political or social relationships, seem to play a part (Chi et al., 2024). Poplack (2018) mentions that it is rarely lexical need that is the cause of code-switching. Instead, code-switching or innovative borrowing can be attributed to "conspicuousness or attention-seeking" (p.139). The relationship between the participants also affects the choice of code. A young person speaking with an older person from their hometown may employ a different register than when they are speaking to another young person from another region. The same two speakers may also use different sets of codes depending on the topic. A business transaction will likely differ from the telling of a joke. It is, however, difficult to predict when code-switching will occur, as it is a dynamic phenomenon (Nilep, 2006).

Previous research has shown that code-switching is more prominent in informal, colloquial speech than in formal situations. Research has also shown that in general, the attitudes to code-

switching seem to be negative. Even speakers who are themselves aware of the fact that they do code-switch explain how it is seen as something done out of laziness, and code-switching has sometimes, by speakers, been perceived as a phenomenon that creates a mixed, less pure version of a language (Gardner-Chloros, 2009).

3.2 **Adjacent terms to CS**

Since code-switching is a broad term with different interpretations and uses, there have also evolved several terms which describe the same or similar phenomenon. Below will follow brief descriptions of some of the most common alternative terminology in the field.

3.2.1 Code-mixing

In his book *Bilingual Speech* (2000), Pieter Muysken uses the term code-mixing. He explains that he uses it to "refer to all cases where lexical items and grammatical features from two languages appear in one sentence" (p.1). In Muysken's case, he reserves the term code-switching for "the rapid succession of several languages in a single speech event" (p.1). However, he also admits that by the linguistic research community, code-switching is the more commonly used term. He suggests that using the term code-switching separates it "too strongly from phenomena of borrowing and interference" (Muysken, 2000, p.4).

3.2.2 Tag-switching

(Manfredo et al. (2015, p.296) refer to the "the insertion of single, high-frequency lexical items from the embedded into the matrix language", a type of intrasentential code-switching that can be seen as a related phenomenon named "tag-switching". They refer to a theory proposed by Caron on the use of tag-switching, explaining that "the most common function of tag-switching is pragmatic: highlighting an event, setting off a personal reaction to what has been said" (Manfredo et al., 2015, p.304). It is not always clear how to distinguish between tag-switching and intrasentential code-switching, but the scholars who make use of the term tag-switching seem to use it in cases of interjections such as "wow", sentence fillers such as "like" or discourse markers, such as "you know" (Yunita & Suryani, 2019). This supposedly differs from regular

intrasentential code-switching, but this definition is a preference of some linguists rather than an agreed upon theory.

3.2.3 Translanguaging

Translanguaging is a term used with a similar meaning to code-switching, and it is sometimes used interchangeably. It was first introduced in the field of bilingual education, where it meant that speakers in a classroom would use two languages in teaching and learning. The term has expanded since its inception in 1994 and has been split up to come to mean a variety of different things, both in and outside of the field of education. Treffers-Daller (2024) explains how it has been used to describe activities such as translation, wordplay or vocabulary teaching, among others. In her article, she also explains how translanguaging by some has been proposed as a replacement term for code-switching. It is not uncommon that terms experience so-called "semantic bleaching", but replacing code-switching with another term would not help in solving the problem with the definition, and Treffers-Daller (2024) even claims that the definition of translanguaging is so vague that almost anyone can make it synthesize with their topic of research.

3.2.4 Slang

Slang is a register of language characterized by informality and has been researched extensively. There is of course not *a slang*, rather, different types of slang develop in different subcultures or communities. Even though some linguists have started rejecting the idea of slang as a separate register, speakers are often clearly aware of the fact that slang exists and is more suitable in certain situations than in others. Slang can also be a bridge or a gateway into a language. Many words that are now considered standard were first used as slang or slurs (Adams, 2023). Slang often overlaps with slurs and jargon, and so-called internet slang or gamer slang often has the function of a jargon or a technical language. Vorontsova & Aldukhov (2023) write about how there is a particular terminology used in the video gaming scene, so-called gamer slang, and how the English version of it differs from the formal register. Further, they explain how Russian gamers often incorporate English words into their slang, and how the English words follow the Russian morphology. Korolchuk & Akhanova (2016) argue that around a game, a form of "universal language" is formed, and that a player of a game does not

necessarily need to speak the in-game language or the language of the interface. They write that knowledge of the interface language can be pointless or sometimes even confusing, since words in-game can have completely different meanings from their meanings in everyday life.

3.2.5 Borrowing

Nogueroles (2018) writes about the multitude of different types of lexical borrowing in language. There are several terms which describe phenomena related to language contact that may seem similar, it is therefore important to separate and define these variations.

Borrowing is related to code-switching, and by linguists it is often assumed that both phenomena exist on a continuum, where code-switching is a sort of gateway for words to enter a language and become borrows, before they become grammaticalized and integrated into the recipient language. Manfredo et.al (2015) give some insight into how to distinguish between borrowing and code-switching. They define code-switching as "the presence of lexical or sentential material belonging to different linguistic systems, provided that its different origin is still transparent in the speaker's output in one or more grammatical domains" (p.286). It is broad, but they explain it further in the text, writing that code-switching is on some level the result of a decision. Code-switching is not necessary, it is a choice made by the speaker, while borrowing more often is an effort to fill a gap in one's language, often a lexical gap. Nouns are the most common type of borrow, and Manfredo et al. (2015) call them lexical fillers or non-core borrowings, because they often refer to phenomena or items that were previously not found in the language. They also write that verbs are less likely to be borrowed, due to structural constraints.

How well a borrowed word is integrated into the recipient language can vary. Due to their different alphabets, borrowed words from English to Russian may come in different orthographical shapes. It can be written by means of transcription, which replicates how a Russian person would pronounce it, as in "ток-шоу" [tok-shou] for "talk-show". This is also the common way of writing names, such as "Нью Йорк" [N'yu York] for "New York". The new word could also be written in correspondence to the English spelling, so called transliteration, as can be seen in the example of фур-шейминг [fur-sheyming], where "fur" is transliterated. Of the two, transcription is the more common way of transferring words into Cyrillic (Kucherova, 2019).

Apart from non-core borrowings, there are also what Myers-Scotton (as seen in Manfredo et al., (2015) calls “core borrowings”, which is when words that already exists in a language get an equivalent from another language, a sort of semantical twin.

Borrowings can then be used by monolinguals, while code-switching presupposes at least some level of bilingualism in the speech community. Grimstad (2017) suggests that the debate on the difference between borrowing and code-switching stems from different uses of the terms. In her article, she also proposes that a word can be both, that it is contextual whether a word should be seen as a borrowed word or an example of code-switching.

3.2.6 Nonce words

Nonce words are words that are made up by the individual speaker in a certain moment, and that are supposed to be used only in that moment. An example of a nonce word would be “wug”, used in the linguistic experiment called “the wug test”. Wug is a word made up to be a new word, in order to test children’s grammatical abilities when encountering unknown words. Nonce words can be monolingual or bilingual, which could then be considered code-switching or tag-switching (De Smet et al., 2022). But how can we differentiate between a nonce word and a new word? Does a nonce word become a new word once it has been used a second time, by a second speaker? What are the requirements that need to be fulfilled in order to be able to call it a new word? Poplack (2018) explains that there are several theories about how foreign words become native. In a way, all words start as nonce words, as a communicational tool or vehicle for information. As they are used and repeated, they adopt more features of the borrowing language and in time become part of the lexicon. It is important to note, however, that most nonce words remain nonce words, and do not become new words. The same goes for nonce borrowings between languages.

3.2.7 Calques

Calques are a kind of borrowing, often also called “loan translation”. It means that a word, phrase or expression is borrowed into a language, but it is translated before doing so. In English, world-view is an example of a calque, being translated from the German word Weltanschauung (McArthur et al., 2018). In Russian, ”детский сад” [detskiy sad] is a calque from the German word “Kindergarten”, which means “children’s garden” and is thusly translated, or calqued into

”детский сад”. This could be considered a German word disguised as Russian. It can be compared to the situation in English, where the word “Kindergarten” is simply borrowed. A problem with calques is that they can sometimes be less transparent than the example above, and therefore difficult to detect.

3.2.8 Anglicisms

Anglicisms are English words that are borrowed into a language; however, the definitions vary also for this term. Some use it to refer only to words of English origin that have entered a language, while others may include words from other languages that enter a language via English. Nogueroles (2018) gives the example of “telephone”, which has spread to many languages, Russian included. The morphemes are of Greek origin, but the word itself was invented in English. This can raise the question of how a word really becomes part of a language.

Apart from regular anglicisms, there are also what Nogueroles (2018) refer to as false anglicisms. These are words that may seem to be of English origin, but that would not make sense or not be transparent to an English-speaking person. Examples of false anglicisms could be the Swedish concept of “after work”, or the Russian word ”фейсконтроль” [feyskontrol’]. They can be formed in a number of ways and are also related to what is sometimes called “false friends”, where a word moves into a new language with a different meaning, or where two very similar words can carry different meanings. An example could be the English word “lunatic”, which means “foolish” or “reckless”, while the Russian word ”лунатик” [lunatik] refers to a sleepwalker.

3.3 Trends in Russian word-formation

In their article, Zhdanova & Ratsiburskaya (2024) discuss the trends in Russian word-formation, and their opinion is that the trend is towards what they call internationalization and democratization. Internationalization is in their article characterized by two-word composites, where one part is from English and the other from Russian, such as in the word “рэп тусовка” [rep tusovka] (rap party), and by affixes such as ”супер-” [super] in a word like ”супернеловко” [supernelovko] (super awkward). By democratization they refer to how colloquial affixes are gaining ground, for example the affix ”-щина” (-ism) which can be found

in a word such as ”шекспировщина” [shekspirovshina] (Shakespeareanism), or in the productive use of the suffix ”-ка” (-ka) in examples such as ”пиратка” (piratka, a pirate copy). Russian online language seems to be becoming more informal and with a high acceptance for different types of language mixing. Russian internet language has also been found to be creative, with word-play as one way of expressing the speaker’s individuality, and in particular the addition of English words into Russian sentences for comic effect (Radchenko, 2024).

3.4 Code-switching in written text

Van Kemenade and Los (2013) write about the peculiarities of using data derived from written text as opposed to transcribed speech. According to them, written styles tend to be more complex and organised, using subclauses, while speech tends to be more loosely organized. This may hold true for planned and edited texts. Šabec (2009), however, writes that internet language, or “netspeak” as she calls it, can often be seen as something situated on a scale between speech and writing. For chat messages, which will provide the data for this study, it can be argued that it is even closer to spoken language, and may be perceived as a third form of communication, “computer-mediated communication” (Zhdanova & Ratsiburskaya, 2024). It is of course a form of written communication, but in many ways it differs from standard writing. For example, capitalization and punctuation is often omitted, and standard spelling may be neglected for different reasons. Chat messages can bear a closer resemblance to speech, the messages being short and characterized by an informal, colloquial style, but with its own peculiarities and unique traits, such as images, or numbers that denote certain set expressions or phrases. For the purpose of this study, while all messages are written, they will be referred to as utterances, and the writers will be referred to as speakers.

3.5 Code-switching in this study

Muysken (2000) writes that in situations of contact between languages, there are many linguistic processes and phenomena happening at the same time. As seen in the previous literature, researchers do not agree on the definitions of code-switching or the usage of the adjacent terminology. It is therefore necessary to specify the definitions that will be used in this study, to outline what will be considered findings in the material. Muysken (2000) explains that

it might be necessary to “divide, perhaps artificially, the domains of study into distinct sets of phenomena” (p.251), which will be done in the following section.

Gardner-Chloros (2009) writes that it is not very easy to draw a distinct line between the different codes. Language is a fluid material. However, to be able to analyse the language a line must be drawn somewhere. For this study a broad definition of codes and code-switching will be employed, as seen in Gardner-Chloros (2009, p.13), who defines code-switching as “a general term covering all outcomes of contact between two varieties, whether or not there is evidence of convergence”. Russian will be considered the main or matrix language in the material. Code-switches will thus be words that are not Russian. But what exactly is a Russian word? Ferm (1992) uses the terms “loans” (заимствования) for foreign words that have entered Russian dictionaries. In Ferm’s text, examples such as “бестселлер” [bestseller] are listed as loans in dictionaries. For this study, such examples will not be considered code-switches. If a word is in a dictionary, it will be considered to have entered the language and be a part of it. There are many different dictionaries that could be used for the selection, but for this study, gramota.ru will be used. Gramota is a digital collection of several of the more well-known Russian dictionaries, such as *Большой толковой словарь русского языка*, *Русский орфографический словарь* and *Современный словарь иностранных слов*, among others. It should, however, also be noted that even though a word appears in the dictionary, it could still be an example of code-switching. Words can re-enter a language with new meanings. In this study, a foreign word used in a new way will be considered a code-switch. An example would be the word ”стример” [strimer], which is found many times in the material. It appears in Gramota, with an explanation from the *Большой толковый словарь русского языка* that describes a type of tape drive used for the recording of cassette tapes. This is not how it is used in the material of this study, instead it now refers to a person recording a so-called “stream”, which is a type of live broadcast on the internet. This meaning of the word is not noted in the dictionaries, and although they are vaguely related to each other, the word “стример” has appeared again with a new meaning and a new grammar attached to it. For the purpose of this study, “стример”, and examples following the same pattern will be considered English words code-switched into a Russian setting. Calques will not be considered code-switches. Since the word or phrases are translated into Russian, they are per the definition of this study not considered code-switches.

What about foreign words that gain Russian grammatical features such as prefixes or suffixes? In the material there is the word ”зарейдил” [zareydil]. It is the root word ”рейд” [reyd], which is the English verb “raid”, also appearing in Gramota, where it means an attack deep behind enemy lines or in the back. This is the same meaning as in the material, however, it does not exist as a verb in the dictionaries. In the case of ”зарейдил”, it has been attached with the prefix “за-” and the masculine singular verb ending “-л”, to form a new word or variation on a word. Such examples with pre-established roots with new attachments will not be considered code-switching, since all parts of the word are already considered Russian.

Another category of code-switches commonly found in the material is different kinds of abbreviations. Russian language has a rich history of creating syllabic abbreviations, such as “колхоз” [kolkhoz] from ”коллективное хозяйство” [kollektivnoye khozyaystvo]. Other kinds of abbreviations found in the material are acronyms, such as “ДЕ” [DE] for “Definitive Edition” or shortenings, like ”фастимп” [fastimp] for “Fast Imperial”. If one or several of the parts making up the abbreviations are already considered code-switches according to the stipulated frames, then the abbreviations will also be considered code-switches. If the parts in the abbreviations are not code-switches, the abbreviations will not be considered as such either. In cases where it is unclear whether the referents are English or Russian, such as in the case of ”цив” [tsiv] which could refer to the in-game English word “civilization” or the Russian equivalent ”цивилизация” [tsivilizatsiya], it cannot be confirmed that it is a code-switch, and it will not be considered as such.

Words written in the Latin alphabet, whether they be abbreviations or full words, will be considered as code-switches. All usernames on Twitch are, however, written using the Latin alphabet. These examples will not be taken up in the material. It would be possible to write, in example, Vinchester as ”Винчестер”, but in the context of Twitch, it would remove the function to tag or refer to Vinchester in the chat. As noted in Albirini et al. (2016), code-switching is based on a choice, and in this instance, the choice is limited. Since the speakers who want to refer to a user does not have the choice between different codes, doing so will not be considered a switch.

To summarize this section, a collection of dictionaries will be used to draw the line between what is a Russian word and what is not. If words of foreign origin do not appear in the dictionaries, they will be considered code-switches. Foreign words with Russian grammatical features and abbreviations with foreign parts will be noted as code-switches. If words of foreign

origin do appear in the dictionaries, the meaning will be checked to see whether it is the same word, or if the finding in the material is a code-switched word with a new meaning. Text in the Latin alphabet will be noted as code-switching.

4. Material

The material that will be studied in this paper comes from the video streaming platform Twitch. On Twitch, viewers can watch broadcasts, or so-called “streams” of different video games or e-sports and chat with each other. Russia’s most successful *Age of Empires 2* player and streamer, Dmitry Smirnov, appearing under his nickname SalzZ_Vinchester, or just Vinchester for short, has a fanbase of around 15,000 subscribers to whom he streams. These viewers watch the stream live and use a special chat window to react to things happening in the stream, to interact with the streamer or to talk to each other about various topics. These chat messages have for the purpose of this study been compiled into several corpora, which allows us to perform corpus analysis on them. The corpora are compiled of chats created between 20250207 and 20250224. This represents all streams published in February 2025, and amounts to a total of 5 streams, or circa 11 hours of video.

The original chat logs contain many instances of automated messages, advertisements or different kinds of messages explaining what kind of stream the viewers are watching. In example, one automated message could be “Don’t forget to subscribe using Amazon Prime”. These kinds of messages have been excluded from the material, as they are not part of the speech of the participants, instead they are sent by automatic chat bots. It is also common with different kinds of emotes or emojis, sent by the players as reactions. The short commands for these extralinguistic pictograms are often in English and could thus have been considered as code-switches, but since they are pictures representing more than the words they are connected to, these have also been excluded from the material. The taunting system, with numbers meaning certain predefined phrases, is used in the chat, but has been excluded from the material. It may, however, be interesting to note that Russian speakers are using it even though the messages are in English, and this usage could have been considered code-switching. In total, the material consists of 832 chat messages.

4.1 Age of Empires II and the community

Age of Empires II is a video game belonging to the Real Time Strategy-genre. The first version of the game was released in 1999, called *Age of Empires II: The Age of Kings*. It was developed by Ensemble studios and published by Microsoft. The game and its subsequent expansion *The*

Conquerors was a success among players and critics alike, and it is seen as one of the most influential games in the genre. In 2019, a new, updated version of the game called *Age of Empires II: Definitive Edition* was released, and that is the version that is played by most people today (Hunt, 2019). The game is quite typical of its genre, and involves base-building, resource management and military conquest. It can be played by up to 8 players, either computer-controlled or controlled by human players. The most common mode is one person playing against another person, so called 1v1.

Around the game, a community of players and spectators has developed and grown, and it is now one of the most popular games in the genre. It is also a popular e-sport, with tournaments and leagues for players to participate in. The most successful players of the game, with names like Hera or Liereyy are making tens of thousands of dollars by competing in tournaments and through earnings from streaming or Youtube videos (*Liereyy*, n.d.). The Youtuber called "Spirit of the Law" creates videos discussing the game, with some of the more popular videos having around 2 million views, and the streamer T90 has 370,000 followers and over 2 million views on his videos. As can be seen from the numbers, the game is a big phenomenon. There are also several forums discussing the game, and the main discourse is, not surprisingly, in English. Other language communities have, however, also come into existence. There is for example a Spanish community, with Spanish-speaking players, commentators and content creators, and, as will be especially relevant for this thesis, there is a Russian speaking community. It is important to note that the communities are not regulated by national borders or political relations. A large part of the Spanish-speaking community is found in South America, and the Russian speaking community involves players from several countries, not only Russia.

Games often have a particular slang connected to them (Ageeva & Gimadiyeva, 2022), and this idea seems to hold true also for the object of research in this thesis. Players use general gamer slang with abbreviations such as "gg" for "good game", or "gl" for "good luck", but there are also expressions specific to this particular game. Many are abbreviations using the first letters, such as "UU" for "Unique Unit" or "BF" for "Black Forest", while others are contractions, such as "demo" for "demolition ship" or "mango" for "mangonel". There are also what could be considered regular slang expressions, such as "trash" which refers to types of in-game units that do not cost gold to create, or "shawarma rider" for the unit "shrivamsha rider" (*Colloquial Language*, 2021). The game also features a system of so-called "taunts", which is a number that can be written in the in-game chat to prompt certain voice messages, which is

used by the community outside of the game. The taunts vary in complexity, with some being quite simple such as “1”, which signifies “yes”, “2” which signifies “no” and “11” which indicates laughter. More complex versions include “14” which prompts the message “start the game already” and is often used as a question to the player if they are ready to start the game or not.

5. Method

This study will make use of a mixture of quantitative and qualitative analysis, with the qualitative analysis having an observational and descriptive perspective. Drawing on the principles of corpus linguistics, the sample texts will be read manually and analysed for any occurrences of code-switching according to the definition discussed in section 3.5, where dictionaries will be used to specify what does not classify as a Russian word and what is to be considered a code-switch. Carrió-Pastor (2020) writes that corpus analysis can be performed on texts of any kind and can reveal lexico-grammatical features or discover patterns and structures in language use, which is precisely what this study aims to do.

The texts will be "washed" by deleting material that is not considered speech. This means that automated messages from chatbots will be excluded, as will emojis and taunts. Individual speakers will be anonymized by replacing their usernames with a unique number. This will protect their integrity, while still allowing to determine whether a particular case of code-switching is a recurring case typical for the group, or if it is a part of one individual's code. For this study, the linguistical units to be analysed are words or word combinations up to entire sentences. The found occurrences of code-switching will be placed in different categories, which will then be examined further in their context, discussing noteworthy grammatical features such as morphology, inflection and conjugation. This will be the qualitative analysis. The analysed texts will also be collected and compiled into a corpus, using the corpus software AntConc. This will allow quantitative analysis, which can show the frequency of code-switching in the data, also revealing which type of words are most frequently used.

This study does not differentiate between intersentential code-switching, that is when a sentence in language 1 is followed by a sentence in language 2, or intrasentential code-switching, that is when a sentence starts in language 1 and words or phrases from language 2 are inserted into the sentence. The nature of the material, it being informal chat messages, means that paragraphs with several sentences, or even full sentences, are not the norm. Both inter- and intrasentential code-switching will be treated simply as code-switching.

Th. Gries & Newman (2013) lets us know that corpora can take many different forms, and that the ideal size is one that lets the user answer their research questions. A particular corpus may be very useful for one study, whereas for another the same corpus may be useless. The

corpora used for this study will be compiled for the specific purpose of answering the posed questions about code-switching, but could, when compared to other more comprehensive corpora, be considered small. A corpus is, however, always to be considered a partial view, a cross-section of something larger.

It is not always entirely clear what constitutes a word, and for this study, it was necessary to establish what can be considered a Russian word, and where to draw the line between slang and code-switching. If a word should be considered domesticated or integrated into a language can be a matter of discussion (Grimstad, 2017). A dictionary often has a prescriptive perspective, and can make speakers draw the conclusion that if a word is not in the dictionary, then it is not a word. However, words can be in use in a language long before they enter the dictionary, if they ever do, and they can clearly become part of that language (Bergenholtz, 2003). Otherwise, new words would simply not be invented. Descriptiveness nonetheless needs to exist within boundaries. It would not suffice to say that because it is possible to write "wiopq" and imagine that it describes "a feeling of stress felt when writing a thesis", it is now a word in English. Therefore, as mentioned above, a collection of dictionaries was used. A different study may have made good use of another boundary.

5.1 Ethical issues

Sociolinguists working with humans and their way of speaking always need to pay attention to the ethical aspects of their research. Eckert (2013, p.14) writes that "*consent* is the cornerstone of ethical research practices", and that the "importance of consent depends on the potential effect the research may have on the participant or the participant's community" (ibid). Eckert also explains that data collected from a public space can be seen as implicitly consensual, but that anonymity is still important to consider, and that it can differ from space to space. She writes further that the Internet is a gold mine for linguists who want to acquire data, but that it comes with its own problems. The Internet can be public, with information meant to be spread, and it can be private, or semi-private. Even though the speaker may understand that their message could be read by anyone, they may not intend or expect it. The material for the present study is gathered from a publicly available Twitch channel. The users have agreed to the Twitch terms of service, which means that they consent to the fact that their chat messages may be viewable for others during the livestream, and saved for viewing after the livestream is ended

(*Terms of Service*, n.d.). The users are also using nicknames or pseudonyms, which means that a level of anonymity can be preserved. Furthermore, the usernames will be codified in the study, creating another layer of anonymity. The raw data in the corpora is already available through Twitch, and the corpora will only be available to the author. With these considerations in mind, it can be said that the present study meets the requirements for responsible and ethical research.

5.2 Pros, cons and limitations

In this study conclusions will be drawn from performance data rather than competence data. There is no way to analyse what is not there, which may lead to an incomplete explanation of the different modes of code-switching. Negative evidence, as van Kemenade and Los (2013) calls it, cannot be used to prove that a construction that is not present in the corpus is therefore not possible. This study will only be able to show what is possible, and only a fraction of all that is possible.

The study will not be able to present the sociodemographic metadata of the speakers. This, however, is not uncommon when working on texts retrieved from the internet (Th. Gries & Newman, 2013). The number of speakers compared to the limited time and manpower of this study also means that in depth analysis of the individuals and their language is not possible. Linguistic interviews can be employed for more data and for data about the speaker attitudes. This was also not deemed to fit within the scope of this study, but may be a topic for further research into the subject of code-switching in this particular setting.

The fact that the texts are extracted without the speakers knowing it is an advantage that ensures that the observer's paradox is avoided, and that the speakers perform what can be considered natural speech, in this specific context.

6. Analysis

The following section will discuss the results. As the material consisted of a total of 271 code-switches, there will not be space to discuss every example. Instead, a few examples from the different categories will be highlighted and discussed. As mentioned, the words were classified into 6 different categories: Game specific code-switches, English words in Cyrillic script, Russified English words, Abbreviations of English words, English words written in the Latin alphabet, and Other. There are overlaps between categories, but the reasoning behind them will be explained below.

The first needle's eye that the code-switches need to pass through is determining whether they are game-specific code-switches or not. Game-specific refers to words or phrases that are found in the English version of the game. This category could include many, or any types of words in the material that could also be placed in other categories such as abbreviations, English words in Cyrillic or Latin, and Russified English words. The word needs to be found in the game, rather than pointing towards it. This means that a word such as ”скаут” [skaut] which refers to the ingame unit “scout” will, along with its derived forms, be found in this category. Words like “фишбум” [fishbum], which is to be read as “fish boom” in English, will however, not be counted. To “fish boom” is an action that is made by the player, but it is not a part of the in-game lexicon, and the game does not provide a translation. It is a word made up by the community.

English words in Cyrillic script are words that remain English, either through transcription or transliteration. The words in this category are not subjected to any Russian grammar. Examples of words in this category are “геймплей” (gameplay), “инвайт” (invite) and “сорри” (sorry). These words may, however, appear in the category Russified English words, when they have acquired Russian grammar. In example, ”стрим” [strim] is considered an English word in Cyrillic script, but “стримов” is found in the category of Russified English words.

Russified English words are also written in Cyrillic, but they have been subjected to Russian grammar and have some form of Russian morphology attached to them. The attachment can be minimal, such as the addition of a nominative plural ending, as seen in ”ауткасты” [autkasty], or it can be more prominent, as in “дизастрич” [dizastrich] or ”передоминатил” [peredominatil].

Abbreviations of English words come in different forms. For them to end up in this category, they can be initialisms, where the first letters of the words form an abbreviation that is pronounced as the letters, in example ”тг” [tg], short for “team game”. There are acronyms, where the first letters form something that is pronounced like a new word, such as “лол” [lol], for “laughing out loud”. There are examples of shortenings, where the beginning or ending of the word is omitted, such as in ”деф” [def], short for “defence”. It can also be contractions, where parts in the middle of a word are omitted, such as in ”плз” [plz], for “please”.

The category English words written in the Latin alphabet incorporates any phrases written in the Latin alphabet that is not a username. In the entire material, this part is not insignificant, with almost 300 words in English. However, this part is reduced substantially when only including utterances by Russian speakers. In this category abbreviations and complete sentences may be found.

The category of Other is used for words that are neither Russian nor English. They can be written in either Cyrillic or Latin script and could be from any language. This category is by far the smallest.

6.1 Quantitative analysis

The edited material analysed consists of 4533 words compiled from 5 chats, belonging to the same number of streams. The total number of code-switches were 271, or in total 329 words, which amounts to 7% of the total number of words. The number of individual speakers was 129. The languages were divided into Russian, English and Other, and if a speaker used words from one of these three categories they were entered as speakers of that variety. Of the 129 speakers, 100 (78%) produced utterances in Russian. Of these 100 Russian speakers, 58 engaged in some kind of code-switching, 55 into English and 3 into another language. 2 speakers were found to speak Russian, English and another language. 27 of the 129 speakers (21%) were observed only speaking in English. As this thesis examines code-switching among Russian speakers, this caused a dilemma. Should these utterances in English, by what seems to be non-Russian speakers, be included as findings or should they be excluded? While some of these phrases seem to come from non-Russian speakers, such as “TRANSLATE MAN” and “when come to argentina?”, others, like “gg” may be examples Russian-speakers engaging in code-switching. As the purpose of this thesis is to examine code-switching among Russian speakers, any potential code-switches made by speakers that do not speak Russian somewhere

in the material is excluded. This can be exemplified by comparing two speakers. Speaker115 writes “gg”, which could be an example of code-switching. However, since speaker115 does not produce any words or phrases in Russian in the material, this code-switch does not count, as speaker 115 is not considered a Russian speaker. Speaker2 also writes “gg”, and since speaker2 is found speaking Russian in other parts of the material, speaker2 is classified as a Russian-speaker, and their “gg” is counted as code-switching. By making this distinction there is a risk of excluding Russian-speakers and their code-switching. In example, there is speaker56, who only writes one message in the entire material, which happens to be “gg”. This could be a Russian-speaker performing a code-switch, but since the material does not provide any way to discern whether speaker56 is a Russian-speaker or not, their “gg” is excluded. This means that the number of code-switches may be higher than presented here, but this method ensures the validity of the results; all code-switches presented are made by Russian-speakers.

As can be seen from *Table 1*, most speakers produced at least some Russian. The fact that 27 speakers (21%) produced only in English or in another language indicates that the community is not as monolingually Russian as it might initially seem. However, the nature of the chat also means that speakers are not necessarily engaging in conversation with one another. Some of the speakers noted as speaking only English may have produced a single utterance. It is therefore important to acknowledge that these statistics only show actual produced language and does not prove that they are only speakers of a certain variety. The number of utterances per speaker has not been noted, but it can be said that some speakers are much more active than others. Whether they code-switch or not in these particular chats of course also affects the results.

Total	Russian	English	Other	Only Russian	Only English	Only Other	Russian + English	Russian + Other	English + Other	Russian + English + Other
129	100	84	7	42	27	0	53	3	2	2

Table 1. This table shows the number of speakers of each variety or combination of codes.

The numbers in *Table 1* show that in general, as a community, this group has a degree of competency in English, even though the main language is Russian. A majority of the Russian-

speakers engaged in code-switching of some form. The fact that word-explanations were generally not requested point to the conclusion that the terminology was not spontaneous or nonce-borrowings, but that the words used were familiar in the community and could be seen to make up a local lexicon. Here it can be noted that a lack of result does not necessarily indicate a lack of ability, which is further strengthened by the fact that code-switched words were not explained. Speakers can have a passive knowledge of the words, or simply not partake in the conversation.

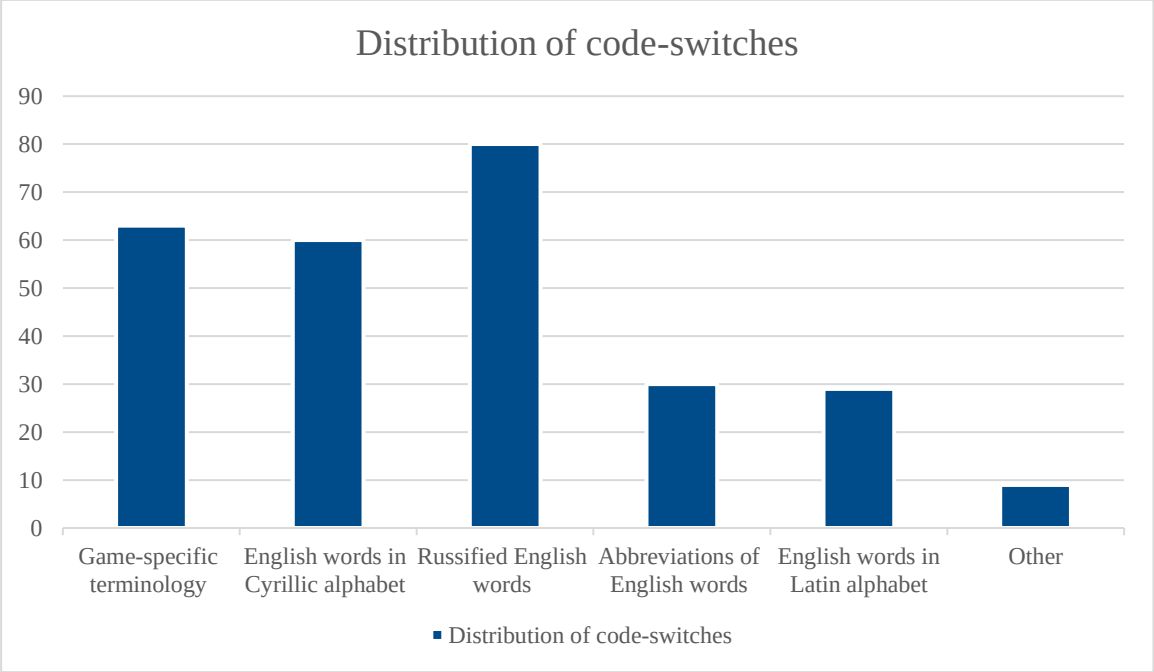

Table 2. This graph shows the distribution among the different categories.

The most common word in the entire material is the particle “не” [ne] (119 times), followed by the preposition “в” [v] (96 times). The most common word among the words that have been registered as code-switches is “стрим” [strim]. Here, its different derivatives, such as ”стример” and ”стримишь” are included, even though they end up in different categories.
The most common category, as can be seen above, is Russified English words, with 80 hits, or 30% of the total code-switches. By far, the most common word class found among the code-switches is nouns, followed by verbs, and in third place adjectives. This agrees somewhat with Albirini’s (2016) claim that nouns are the most code-switched word class. Verbs, however, were also code-switched to a high degree, something that goes against Albirini’s idea that

structural constraints should hinder this process. Interjections were the fourth most common word class, while adverbs and prepositions were found only 2 times each.

6.2 Qualitative analysis

As could be seen in the numbers above, certain types of code-switches were more common than others, and in this section they will be discussed further.

6.2.1 Game specific code-switches

The words found in this category are words that are included in the game. It does not include words that would be found in discussions revolving around the game. This category also contains words that could be included in several of the other categories, but due to them being found in the game, they are placed in this special category. The fact that this category provides 63 hits, or 23% of the total code-switches indicates that precision of terminology is perhaps not a priority in this community. Even though it was not noted, by reading the material it was possible to see that sometimes the speakers would refer to in-game units by their English names, and sometimes by their Russian equivalents. The unit “scout” was sometimes called скаут [skaut], sometimes a разведчик [razvedchik].

One common abbreviation, appearing 6 times in the material, was ”ТЦ” [T+TS], an abbreviation of the English word “town center”, called a “TC”, which is one of the buildings found in the game. The building is seen in every single game, so it comes as no surprise that it is a common word in the material. It may, however, be interesting to note the choice of letters. The choice of “ТЦ” could reflect a tradition of transliterating the Latin letter “C” with a Cyrillic “Ц”. This can be observed in the Russian word ”центр” from the Latin word “centrum”, or ”царь” from “ceasar”. It can also be seen in the reverse case, when transliterating from Russian to English, in the case of the Russian and Soviet sports club ЦСКА Москва, which in English becomes CSKA Moscow. The fact that “town center” is transliterated in this way seems to indicate at least partial integration into the Russian language system. It could have been calqued, resulting in “ГЦ” [G+TS] for “городской центр” [gorodskoy tsentr], or it could have been written as the English version, “TC”, using the Cyrillic twins (TC) of the letters. Abbreviating “TC” as “ТЦ” shows that it is not the phonetic image of the English word that is in play.

A similar discussion could be had about the established abbreviation of the in-game unit “cavalry archer”. In English, it is abbreviated as “CA”, and the two letters are pronounced

separately, as “C-A”. The Russian abbreviation is instead ”ЦА” [TS+A]. This seems to indicate that the abbreviation is adapted from written rather than spoken language. This seems less intuitive and more complicated to explain than the example of “TC”, where the corresponding phonological and orthographical equivalent of “center” would be ”центр”, as mentioned above. The ЦА also appears in the form of ”цашка” [tsashka], with the Russian diminutive ending.

The word “лум” [lum], which is the English word “loom”, found in the game, shows that the adoption of words is not consistent. While “CA” was adapted from written language, ”лум” seems to be taken from spoken, otherwise, the expected form would be “лоом” [loom]. This provides an interesting example of the multitude of resources available for a bilingual person when code-switching is imminent.

6.2.2 English words in Cyrillic

The second category in the material is English words transliterated or transcribed into Cyrillic. This category provided the material with 60 instances of code-switching, which makes up 22% of the total. Words of this category are words like ”голд” [gold], where it is transliterated, or words like “мап контроль” [map kontrol’], which is transcribed, as can be seen by the addition of the soft sign (ь) at the end. The words in this category do not have Russian affixes or other morphological constituents. This means that examples like “голды” [goldy], with a nominative case plural ending, or ”мапконтролить” [mapkontrolit’] with a verb suffix, fall out of this category. It does not always seem to be for lexical reasons that words in this category are code-switched, since it would be possible to express them in Russian. A possible reason for the code-switching in this category could be for precision of expression. However, it is not entirely unambiguous, since for example gold is not easily confused with something else in the game. Ferm (1992) writes that when new domains open in a language, new words are often loaned from languages where that domain comes from. With the example “стрим”, this seems like a reasonable conclusion. Streaming came to the Russian language via the Internet, an English-speaking domain, and so the word was adopted as well.

The word ”стрим” [strim], which is the English word “stream” occurs 9 times in the material and is the most common word in this category. This seems natural, given that the topic of the conversations often relates to the stream. Viewers thank the caster for the stream, or ask about future streams etc. As discussed above in the text, ”стример” is a Russian word that had a meaning, but it has now re-entered the Russian language with a new meaning.

An interesting type of word in this category are interjections in English. The material provides examples such as “йоу” (yo) and “хай” (hi). The propensity to use English interjections where Russian equivalents exist shows that the wider English internet slang is spreading into other communities.

6.2.3 Russified English words

In this category, words with English roots and Russian affixes are found. This was the largest category in the mix, with 80 occurrences, or 30% of the total. Modification of the words can be minor, as in the example of “голды” [goldy] where the English word “gold” obtains the Russian plural ending. Other words in this category could be heavily laden with Russian grammar, such as in the case of “передамажит” [peredamazhit], which is the English word “damage” with the Russian verbal prefix ”пере-” and a Russian 3rd person singular verbal ending. Дамажить and the perfective form передамажить provide interesting examples where the speakers do not agree on the conjugation of this new word. In 3rd person plural present tense, both “дамажут” and ”дамажат” appear, and speaker19 even uses both forms. Of the two, the preference seems appears to be for ”дамажат”, which is also more common than the Russian form ”наносить урон”.

Another example from this category is the word “хоткеями” [khotkeyami] and variations on it. It refers to the English word “hotkey”, which is a key or a combination of keys on a computer keyboard that performs an operation instead of using the mouse buttons, a type of shortcut. An example of a hotkey that the reader might be familiar with is the ctrl+c for copy and ctrl+v for paste. Being able to quickly perform a task is an important part of the competitive gaming scene, and thus it is a part of this gaming community. In Russian, there exists a calque of the English “hotkey”, “горячая клавиша” [goryachaya klavisha], which means precisely “hot key”. This calque did not appear in the material as opposed to the English word, which could indicate a preference among the community. A plausible explanation is linguistic economy, “хоткей” is shorter than “горячая клавиша”. It could also be due to an influence from the English-speaking part of the larger community.

In this category the word “пушить” [pushit’] with perfective forms ”пропушил” [propushil] and “запушил” [zapushil] may be found. Morphologically it consists of three parts that are productive in Russian: the root “пуш” [push], a prefix in the form of про [pro] or за [za], and the singular masculine past tense verb ending “-л” [-l]. It could appear to be a Russian word,

however, it is not found in Gramota. That is because it is the English word “push” that has entered the vocabulary as a Russian intransitive verb. ”Пушить” seems to be a word understood in the community, as speaker5 even uses it to explain the English word “smoosh”, claiming that “smoosh” in the context of aoe can be translated to “пушить” or ”прессовать” [pressovat’]. Speaker5 uses both the dictionary form прессовать and the community form пушить in the same sentence. The choice of prefixes, за and про, is of course not random, they carry meaning. Barykina & Dobrovol’skaya (2009) list several potential meanings of the prefixes. The entire phrase by speaker19 is “у тебя получилось, что чуть запушил и пошёл на базу дефать.” (You managed to push a little and went to the base to defend.). За is in this likely in analogy with the listed verb “запрессовать”. With про, there is no corresponding form, no ”пропрессовать” listed in the dictionaries. The entire phrase by speaker28 is “и не пропушил ничего” (and did not push anything), where they express a disappointment in a player who did not contribute to the team. A plausible explanation is that про here refers to the meaning as seen in Barykina & Dobrovol’skaya (2009) where it means a movement through something. The player about whom speaker28 is complaining did not manage to push through the defences of the opposing team.

A word with a similar story to пушить is “масситъ” [massit’] and its perfective form “намасситъ” [namassit’]. It comes from the English verb “to mass”, which means “to create large amount” (*Mass*, 2025), and is used precisely in this meaning also in its new Russian context. Here, it gains the на-prefix, which Barykina & Dobrovol’skaya (2009) explains can indicate a gradual accumulation. This usage of масситъ is found in one interaction where three speakers use it one after another, which could indicate that the first user triggers others to use the same code-switch.

Another noteworthy example is ”голды” [goldy], which is is essentially creating a plural of the uncountable noun gold. Here it refers to the material gold, which in the example is counted. Speaker19 refers to how it in the game is possible to sell wood, and that it is favourable to do so when the wood sells for more than 70 gold (“да там не обязательно через камень. можно дерево продавать. Пока оно дороже 70 голды, то его выгодно продавать за еду”). Normally, the word following the number 70 would in Russian be expected to have a genitive plural ending, but here, the word takes the nominative plural ending. In English, it would be called “70 gold”, rather than “70 golds”. This usage opposes both what would be expected from English grammar and from Russian grammar.

“Ranked”, which is an adjective in English, is used to differentiate between ranked games and casual games. Ranked matches are part of the competitive scene. In English, it is often called simply ranked, where the ranked is nominalized and functions as a noun, even though the word itself is an adjective. In Russian, nominalization of adjectives is not an uncommon feature, it can be found in words such as ”знакомый” [znakomiy], which literally means “familiar”, but is often translated as “an acquaintance”. Nominalized adjectives are inflected as adjectives. In the material, the phrase ”в ранкеде” [v rankede] (in ranked) is found, where “ranked” is inflected with the prepositional noun affix “-е” instead of the adjective affix “-ом”. This changes the word class of “ranked”. Both ”голды” and ”в ранкеде”, that break the expected grammatical rules, provide support for the idea that code-switching is not just inserting vocabulary into a matrix-grammar, rather, it is something of its own, a synthesis of different systems working.

6.2.4 Abbreviations of English words

Abbreviations of English words, with 30 occurrences in the material, was the fourth most common of the six categories. While some, like ”лол” [lol] are part of larger Internet slang, others were more specific to gaming in general or to this particular game.

The most common abbreviation in the material was the word “донат” [donat], a short form for the English word “donation”, in example used in the phrase “Винч что лучше донат или подписка?” (Vinch what is better donation or subscription?). There is of course a Russian equivalent of this word, but the community seems to prefer this English short form. It has even been derived into a verb, as seen in the phrase by speaker3: “Я постоянно через ДА доначу” (I always donate through DA). A driving factor in this switch could be that the website Twitch is in English, and the word “donate” or “donation” is used in the terminology of the website.

Another abbreviation that was found in both Cyrillic and Latin letters was “гг” [gg], short for “good game”. It is written at the end of a match as a sign of good sportsmanship, usually immediately before resigning and admitting defeat, or in the case of the spectators, to express their thanks for the game they got to view. It can, however, also be used to signal that the game is over and that the losing player should resign. It was used 3 times in Cyrillic, and 2 times in Latin. It was found both standalone and in otherwise Cyrillic utterances, like “чет он пошел строить замок без прикрытия) GG” (chat he went to build a castle without protection) GG).

6.2.5 English words in the Latin alphabet

Any words, phrases or expressions written in the Latin alphabet rather than the Cyrillic are collected in this category. These results constitute code-switches on a language level, but also on the level of the writing system. Deciding to write in Latin would mean that the writer has to change the keyboard configuration, which could be a deterring factor. This means that the results in Latin could be seen as deliberate and conscious choices. The material provide 29 (11%) instances of English words or expressions written in the Latin alphabet, making it the second smallest category. The general motivation for this type of code-switches seems to be to connect to a larger English-speaking online community, and it appears that a trigger can be the appearance of English-speakers. In the chat log from 20250224, a well-known Spanish- and English-speaking streamer performs a so-called raid, or a digital visit, on Vinchester's stream. This prompts greetings and some discussions in English.

Interestingly enough, no Russian words or words of Russian origin are found to be written using the Latin alphabet. This was also one of the two categories where longer phrases could be found. However, among the 29 occurrences, only 4 are longer than 2 words. 17 are single words. This indicates that the role of Russian as a matrix language in this setting is very strong.

6.2.6 Other

This category collects words from various languages. With 9 instances, 3% of the total, this is the smallest category. Some examples found were the Spanish greeting "hola", "oh nein" which is German for "oh no", and "salam", a greeting used in Arabic and Muslim regions. This category also contains longer phrases in Belarusian, and imitations of expressions said by units in the game, such as "рабоге" [raboge], for "Ráthbuige", said by Celtic villagers. No analysis will be provided for words of this category, but it is included for the sake of transparency. As mentioned above, none of the speakers were found using only words from this category. Although it is not shown in the material, the analysis of the conversations reveals that some of these speakers were not a regular part of the community, but rather ended up in the stream via so-called "raids", where streamers take their viewers and visit another streamer. This was an especially clear case in the transcript from 20250224, where a raid is announced by a well-known streamer from the Spanish-speaking community.

Just as with the category English words in Latin, this is one of the two categories where longer phrases could be found. Of the 9 hits, 6 are full sentences by speaker73, who speaks in

Belarusian, while other speakers answer in Russian. Speaker73 is one of the two speakers using Russian, English, and Other, but their preference seems to be for Belarusian.

7. Discussion & concluding remarks

This thesis has attempted to answer questions about written code-switching among Russian-speaking Internet users belonging to a particular video-game community. As could be seen in the analysis, code-switching is a feature in this group with a code-switching frequency of 7%, and the majority of the Russian-speakers did engage in it. Examples of how words are loaned or brought into Russian have been presented, showing great creativity and variety among speakers. The examples demonstrated that code-switching is unpredictable, both in terms of when it will occur, as in what forms the switched words may take. Some words are borrowed directly; other words may become infused with Russian grammar. The speakers do not always agree on the correct grammar, and different conjugations may be used for one word. Nouns were shown to be the most common word class among the code-switches, but words from 6 word classes could be found: nouns, verbs, adjectives, interjections, prepositions and adverbs. In written form they may be adopted according to transcriptional principles or by transliterating them from English.

In this study, code-switches were categorized into six different categories. The data does not explicitly evidence why the speakers code-switch in this community. The fact that most of the code-switches were not prompted by the game specifically indicates that it is not for linguistic precision, but rather for other social reasons that speakers switch codes. The use of English words in cases where there are Russian equivalents could indicate that the speakers are also partaking in the English-speaking community, bringing a register back to the Russian-speaking community.

Even though this study did not differentiate between intrasentential and intersentential code-switching, it was easy to see from the material that intrasentential code-switching was preferred.

This thesis discussed one given community, and it is not certain that the results here can be extrapolated to apply for Russian-speaking gamers in general. Looking at a greater number of texts or texts from a different period might have revealed different results. This study also revealed the complexity of studying a speech community with a large number of speakers, and with speakers who participate to a varying degree in the conversation. A study that focused more on individuals rather than the group could have revealed other aspects about the demographics of the group, and about the speakers' attitudes to code-switching.

An aspect that was left out of this thesis, and that could have made for interesting results is to pick certain findings, in example “голд” [gold] and compare the use of code-switches to the Russian equivalents. This could have shown whether certain words are replaced by code-switches entirely or if they are used alternately.

The topic of Russian-English code-switching is not very well examined, and this study may serve as an inspiration to continue the research on a highly dynamic and increasingly popular language community.

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