A Let's Player's Playful Attitude in a YouTube community

MA Thesis New Media & Digital Culture

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Abstract

Let's Play videos have been on the rise for the last decade, as well as the number of people who create these videos. Let's Players document video game content, often appearing on screen and adding their own commentary. The videos have now become a common source of entertainment on YouTube; some of the most popular Let's Player's channels getting an average of over 7 million views every day. But what makes these videos so appealing to people? The subject has not been debated much, though scholars have mostly discussed this phenomenon through concepts of play and performance. From my perspective, an underlying cultural shift towards playfulness is at the core of the development of this cultural phenomenon; we now seek the intimate, emotional and fun through things which are not intrinsically designed to be so. In my thesis, I argue that the concept of playful attitude, by the theory of Miguel Sicart, is essential for understanding the appeal of Let's Play videos in contemporary video game society. Not only does the concept shed a new light on the subject, it also places it helps us to situate it in the contemporary Western culture of technology. How does ShadyPenguinn (a popular Let's Player), engage his audience through playful identity? I have conducted a textual analysis of three of his Pokémon videos, analysing patterns in his language, play and behaviour in order to answer this question. ShadyPenguinn creatively mixes his roles of entertainer, player and community leader to engage his audience. His playful attitude towards these roles not only adds interesting dynamics to the game, but is at the core of a Let's Play's unique experience.

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First and foremost, I would like to thank my sister, Renate Oosterloo, for her intensive help, which without this thesis would probably never have become a finished product. I would also like to thank her, my parents and my boyfriend for supporting me mentally throughout the process of writing when things started to look down. Lastly, I would like to thank Teresa de la Hera Conde-Pumpido, as she was patient and understanding towards the personal matters that at times stopped me from progressing. I hope you will find the perspective this thesis brings on the subject of Let's Play videos interesting and that it may bring you, the reader, some useful insights.

Eline Oosterloo

Contents

Introduction

My alarm goes off, I get out of bed and prepare the day. While eating breakfast, I like to start my day on a cheerful note and turn on a video of ShadyPenguinn on YouTube. There, he plays the new generation of competitive Pokémon, while entertaining his audience. I watch because I want to engage with one of my favourite video games. At the same time, I want to laugh about ShadyPenguinn's jokes. While it is true that I want to learn the meta of the video and become better at the game, I am still absorbed into ShadyPenguinn's videos, even though he is not nearly the best player who uploads his gameplay on YouTube. It is as René Glas argues; Let's Plays do not necessarily revolve around the player's expertise or skill when it comes to the gaming (Glas, 2015). People watch LPs for many different reasons, like watching LPers for their humour or play style.

ShadyPenguinn can be described as a Let's Player[1] (LPer) who mainly focuses on online competition of the latest official main Pokémon games, *Pokémon Sun* and *Pokémon Moon* (2016). However, ShadyPenguinn also plays other video games on his YouTube channel from time to time and occasionally invites guests to his channel on special occasions, like his wife appeared in some of his videos, in which he calls her "Shady Lady". His real name is Jonathan Vincent Indovino, but he uses the name "ShadyPenguinn" for his YouTube identity and can thus be seen as his stage name. The LPer uses the Pokémon 'Delibird', which looks like a penguin, with sunglasses (shades) as his logo. He started gaining fame in 2013 when he first aired a LP series on Pokémon Dark Rising. With over 400.000 subscribers on YouTube ShadyPenguinn has become one of the most famous streamers within the Pokémon playing community

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[1] A Let's Player is someone who makes a series of videos, documenting videogame content. Often, the LPer appears on screen and adds commentary of his or her own.

(http://www.famousbirthdays.com/people/shadypenguinn.html). While people who do not play this game usually assume that the game is for children only, its competitive community consists of people with an average age of around 20 years old. I have seen this myself, as I have attended several Pokémon competitions in Leiden. As Jonathan Indivino is 25 years old, he is thus still of representative age for the community. He is not considered to be one of the best Pokémon players, as he has never received a title and his online ranking is not considered to be one of the highest[2]. His is channel is thus very popular amongst Pokémon player regardless of his competitive success. Unnecessary to state, the element of entertainment lies not solely in the learning aspect or gaining knowledge of video game content by watching instead of playing.

Let's Play videos like ShadyPenguinn's have been on the rise for the last decade. The reason for this rise in popularity during recent years is probably because technology needed for making these videos seems to be more readily and widely available to interested parties. For instance, the average personal computer now has more processing power than, let's say, 20 years ago. On top of PCs being able to run a video game, camera recorder and capturing software at the same time, high quality hardware, such as good microphones and cameras have also become more affordable.

Since LPs haven't been around for that long yet, there is still a need to research the phenomenon further and elucidate its social and societal impact by looking at it from a perspective of *playful attitude*. This thesis is aimed to elucidate the unique author-audience dynamic found in LPs on YouTube and will focus on the concept of playful attitude as explained by Miguel Sicart.[3] In order to operationalize the concept, I will

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2 The online ranking system in Pokémon Sun and Moon works with points. A starting online competitor starts off with 1500 points. A top player would have a ranking of about 1900-2000 points. ShadyPenguinn's ranking varies between 1500 and 1700.
3 Miguel Sicart is Associate Professor at the Center for Computer Game Research at IT University Copenhagen. In his book Play Matters, he describes playfulness as "a physical, psychological and

employ an analysis of ShadyPenguinn's playful attitude through observing his playfulness towards his role as a performer, player and even as a community leader. Rather than categorizing all sorts of playing styles and attitude within the scope of Let's Play videos, this thesis focuses on one particular Let's Player, analysing the dynamic between play and performance. I want to explore how ShadyPenguinn grabs his audience's attention and keeps them intrigued. My believe is that the concept of playful attitude can shed light on a contemporary form of entertainment like the Let's Play video. Therefore, my research question is: How do Let's Players, such as ShadyPenguinn, engage their audience through their playful attitude?

In short, I believe a LPer's performance and its audience's affordance lie at the core of a Let's Play experience. A LPer's performance takes the form of a complex combination of roles while making video content. In order to answer my research question, I need to break it apart into sections and answer some sub-questions.

Firstly, what is a Let's Play video? In the first section of my theoretical framework, I will form some idea of what a Let's Play video is. In defining the concept, I will also use the concept of performance, as well as some other ways scholars have helped us to understand LPs. Since my aim is to understand how ShadyPenguinn engages his audience through a playful attitude, his role of a performer is a crucial one to understand. Furthermore, I have stated that his playful attitude is present towards the roles we understand to be familiar. How can we understand Let's Players as performers and look from this traditional viewpoint to a seemingly novel phenomenon? In order to address this playful attitude, I need to have an understanding of these roles.

In the second part of my theoretical framework I discuss some understanding of the concept of playfulness and playful attitude in order to understand how it helps LPers

emotional attitude toward things, people and situations", separating playfulness from the act play (Sicart, 2014, p. 21). His notion of playfulness will be further discussed on page 9 of this paper.

Eline Oosterloo

to engage an audience in his performance and play. What does it mean to be playful? How does it differ from play? And most importantly, how can we detect a playful attitude within and outside acts of play? In answering these question, I will use Miguel Sicart's theory as my base.

In the last part of the chapter I discuss the element of community and constraints. Though the two concepts may look unrelated at first, I believe that the goal of a LPer is not just to entertain, but to create an environment for community bonding. The LPer thus tries to stay true to a certain target audience, as well as actively engaging them through the comment section, making the experience of play a shared one. This addition role lays constraints on his behaviour and performance. How does the element of community put constraints on his performance? And how can these constraints be seen as a catalyst for adding new dimensions to the way he plays the video game Pokémon? These questions will also be partially answered by my analysis.

As theory is not enough to answer my research question, I need to do an analysis in order to operationalize the concept of playful attitude and put my hypotheses to the test. Before conducting analysis, though, I need to state my method. In my method section, I describe how I plan to conduct my research through a textual analysis of three of ShadyPenguinn's videos. I have chosen three because the aim is to go in depth more than touch the surface of the videos, while the diversity in videos still allow me to illustrate how reconstruction of the video game rules and dynamics, as well as the rules and constraints he puts into his LPs allows for different expressions, resulting in different performances. For all three case studies, I will focus on the content of the videos itself, rather than the comments. My aim is to find patterns in use of language and ways in which he actively engages his audience and encourages the viewers to be active consumers of his videos.

Finally, in my analysis, I will show how the playful attitude of ShadyPenguinn can be detected and how it connects to his roles as performer and player and put my theoretical framework into practice. Hereby, I show how LPers engage their audience in a way that may not be necessarily all new, but at least shows itself as a unique take on a combination of roles that are familiar and traditional, such as a player, actor and community leader.

I am aware that the scope my research is small and that making a generalization of LPers' playful attitude and performance is bold and, moreover, incorrect. However, my aim is not to make generalizations, but to bring to light a new way of approaching the phenomenon academically. Even if my analysis is not that of a vast number of LPers, but only one, I do show how the concept of playful attitude can be usefully operationalized. The concept may, however, be more useful for researching some forms of LPs than it may be for other forms of LPs. For instance, some LPers keep the talking at a bare minimum, are not necessary out there to entertain through other means than their play and a lot of them don't appear on visible on screen. That being said, some of the most popular, such as PewDiePie and ShadyPenguinn do, and the perspective of the research is thus a useful one. A playful attitude can be used as a specific way of engaging an audience, such as using constraints to create challenges in play and add new dynamics to it, switching between roles and playing around their conventions.

Theoretical Framework

Performance in Let's Play Videos

In this part of the theoretical framework, I want to give a brief definition of the Let's Play video. After that, I discuss the element of performance; a crucial concept that arises often when reading about LPs. It is crucial in that it makes us acknowledge the fact that YouTubers act in a certain way that is about more than just having but, namely to entertain an audience. It is one of the roles a LPer must be aware of in order to be consistently and professionally entertaining, and a crucial element in understand not necessarily playfulness on its own, but playfulness in the context of LPers.

What I mean by a Let's Play video is a recorded video of gameplay footage, often accompanied with commentary of the one who plays and records the game (the Let's Player). The content of the commentary or the play style that is shown within videos vary greatly. In this sense, LPs make sure that video games are shown in creative ways that would otherwise be unlikely. They also allow spectators to see what playing styles and techniques are possible within the realms of specific video games (Newman, 2013, p. 62). That being said, viewing LPs as mainly informative sources is insufficient. Some argue that spectator immersion lies at the core of the rising popularity of LPs. In their analysis of the StarCraft spectatorship, Cheung and Huang compare spectating a video with spectatorship of sports. They argue that the spectator is situated both inside and outside what Johan Huizinga has described as 'the magic circle'[3]. Spectators do not take part in the actual act of play, situating them outside of the magic circle, though their immersion and adaptation of the rule world of the game takes them inside. They call this the viewer's paradox; spectators are committed to close engagement with the sports

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3   In 1938, Johan Huizinga described the magic circle as a space that is created for play; a temporary world within the ordinary world, which is dedicated to rules of the game and the act of playing (Huizinga, 1938, p.10).

event/play experience, yet they are distant to it as they are not a direct part of the act itself (Cheung & Huang, 2011, p. 2-3). For them, this paradox of emotional closeness and actual distance is key to understanding the motivation of people to become active spectators of a video game. Cheung and Huang further argue that commentators of StarCraft matches are able to convey emotions and excitement through their comments; the commentator leads the audience through collective tension and relieve (Cheung & Huang, 2011, p. 6). This commentary helps to control your audience's emotions and creates a collective emotional investment. Viewing LPs through the lens of sports spectatorship can give useful insights in understanding an audience's ambiguous role when spectating video games. However, more often than not, LP videos contain content that is different from this traditional spectatorship.

One difference is that most game content on YouTube can be accessed at any time and place, thus is often watched in solitary and at home. Instead of just hearing the LPer's voice, LPers are usually visible on camera from the comforts of their homes and appear to be much closer to the audience as opposed to a more traditional sports commentator, who mostly remain off screen while game content is shown (Peters and Seier, 2009). Not only does this create the illusion of physical closeness, it also enhances emotional closeness, as more non-verbal communication is now visible to interpret for the audience, as would be possible when someone would sit in your own living room.

Another significant difference is that the roles of commentator and player are not separated LP videos. Though video games are often viewed as being a solitaire hobby, performance for an audience, as is seen in LPs, do add to video game experience. As the concept of LP has transformed into a more professional and developed form of gameplay videos, there are now what could be viewed as standard formulas and formats of LPs. Every act that is performed through computational space is meant to please and amuse the people watching; there is an intent to entertain, with every element of the

video composed in order to fulfil that intent. Corbett argues that digital spaces are fertile for remediation between video games and theatre. Video games seem to have taken elements from theatre and made it part of itself. She further argues that in this process, LPers take more and more from theatre, taking on the role of a player and actor in their process of playing and recording video game content (Corbett, 2009, pp. 11-13). Brenda Laurel uses the metaphor of 'theatre' in order to create a better understanding of the role of the computer when it comes to creating online content. For her, an individual making a video is not unlike someone performing on stage before an audience. Like in theatrical plays, the person making a video or writing comments does so with the full awareness of the fact that a wide, unknown variety of people is watching. The computer itself is the backstage, anything the person in front of the computer produces and distributes on the internet is the act. The audience is behind other technical devices at the receiving end. This is where the concept of performance comes into play (Laurel 1991, p. 14,15). LPers such as ShadyPenguinn deal with gameplay that partially rests on luck and the unpredictability of their enemies and outcomes of strategies. This unpredictability can't be studied and rehearsed, and thus if one would metaphorically view LPs as theatrical acts, it should at least be an improvisational one. LPers need to adapt a commentator-like style at narrate their gameplay, both predictable and unexpected events, for their audience. It is somewhere within this mixture of theatre, computational elements, and blur between player and commentator that the LPer is ought to be understood. In this thesis, I wish to add a novel perspective when it comes to analysing LPs, as I aim to clarify how LPers such as ShadyPenguinn engage their audience through a playful attitude.

Playful Attitude

In this section, I want to elucidate what I mean when I use the word playful in my analysis of ShadyPenguinn. It is important to make the distinction between concepts of play and playfulness in order to understand that the entertainment value of a LP is not so much in the LPer playing games. Rather, it is his attitude towards his video game as well as his attitude towards the role as a performer that underlie it.

In his book *Play Matters*, Miguel Sicart makes a distinction between play and playfulness: "[while] play is an activity, playfulness is an attitude" (Sicart, 2014, p. 22). He argues that playfulness derives from play, and is in a sense the projection of some of characteristics typically found in play onto activities that might not be play. He describes that playfulness in play can arise when athletes perform in a way that is not optimal for reaching their purpose, while also assuming that playfulness is an attitude that does respect the goals and activity in which the attitude may arise. What Miguel Sicart is aiming for here, is to say that playfulness often has something to do with acting in a deviant way. Indeed, some scholars, such as Lieberman, suggest that playfulness and deviance go hand in hand, and that a "divergent thinking" towards thing is at the core of playfulness who found this connection in children. Lieberman emphasizes the importance of being able to "think out of the box" in this playfulness. It is to think defiantly from what is expected or considered to be normal (Lieberman, 1971, p.2). Playfulness seems to them a psychological attitude that results in experimentation with social rules, norms and expectations rather than an act.

Playfulness was at first linked mainly to young age and researched as such, though it is now sought to be investigated through older ages as well. Glynn and Webster have introduced the Adult Playfulness scale, which suggest that playfulness can be tested in adults by testing five different facets: spontaneity, expressiveness,

fun/entertaining, creativeness and silliness (Glynn and Webster, 1992). It is a useful scale in a way that does not make it quantifiable, but in that it allows us to differentiate between different types of playfulness, and how to abstractly recognize playfulness. Barnett defines playfulness as: "... the predisposition to frame/reframe a situation in such a way as to provide oneself with amusement, humour, and/or entertainment" (Barnett, 2007, p. 955). When such as predisposition is heightened, Barnett links this to individuals likely to manifest playfulness into activities by means of joking, teasing and acting 'silly'. Barnett thus also acknowledges certain facets by which playfulness can be identified. 'Entertainment', however, is a broadly defined concept that usually incorporates humour and amusement. Glynn Webster and Barnett point us out to the symptoms of a playful attitude; creativeness, humour and silliness can be seen as results of a psychological and emotional state of being. These are observable elements that derive from an underlying invisible psychological outlook.

Shifman (2011) argues that the 'playfulness' of the an LPer is connected to the fact that LPers are more often than not looking for a humorous, satirical or unexpected way to play the game and seek out the funniest scenarios and adding commentary to accompany it (Shifman, 2011, p. 194-197). He mostly emphasizes that each attribute of whimsicality, humour, repetitiveness and simplicity adds to the flaws of YouTube videos which results into creative dialogue. Now it must be taken into consideration that Shifman focuses on the use of memes and whimsical and repetitive humour that is nowadays often found on popular websites such as 9gag. However, many LPers and YouTubers (ShadyPenguinn included) do not rely on common, repetitive jokes and mostly find that a variety of funny moments happen through playing the game at hand. Finding creative, humorous and unexpected ways to play the game and comment on it

seem to be the most common results of a playful attitude, with 'divergent' thinking at its core.

Miguel Sicart argues that nowadays many technologies are designed to look like something different from what is traditionally expected of them. For instance, a mobile phone is no longer a mobile telephone, but also has functionalities one would associate with a desktop. Furthermore, televisions have become our substitutes for fire places and grandma's bedside stories (Sicart, 2014, p. 19, 20). He views many modern designs to be made to appeal to us emotionally and play around with conventionalities. Let's Play videos fit perfectly into this picture. While one would assume it is a video that is made to show gameplay content, it is actually simultaneously a place for social interaction and community bonding. While the LPer is a presenter that would be emotionally distant from his viewers, he is also like a distant friend asking for suggestions, opinions and sometimes even advice. Here, playfulness is found in the design of the phenomenon. It is a playful way of mixing and matching elements of theatre, gameplay and social interactions into one, so that it appeals to our senses and emotions. It is in these renegotiations and pushing of presumed boundaries and expectations of objects, roles and play that we find the spirit of playfulness.

As for the academic relevance of this thesis, my goal is to operationalize the concept of playful attitude by analysing my case study. As Miguel Sicart argues, central to the playful attitude is the idea that playfulness is not just something that is inherent in play, but is an attitude often found through the act of play. A playful attitude is a way in which many types of acts can be realized, as it can usually be to come up with the unexpected or push the boundaries of certain roles and conventionalities. As the concept has broadly stayed in the abstract, I want to illustrate a concrete example of this playful attitude in acts of performance and audience engagement. Laurel and Corbett argue that

a Let's Player can be understood through concepts of theatre and performance. They argue that this phenomenon is a mixture of video game culture and performance, and that a Let's Player's performance is strongly infused with elements of theatre. In this thesis, I don't merely side with this perspective. I want to emphasize that looking at LPs through the lens of theatre is not enough and that there is more to Let's Play videos than the mixture of the old (theatre) with the new (computers and camera's). As Glas argues, Let's Players mainly engage their audience through playstyle and humor. I argue that elements like performance, playstyle and humor not only influenced by but can even be a product of a Let's Player's playful attitude and that this is a key notion for understanding the phenomenon. By presenting the way in which the LPer plays and negotiates with the flow and rules of the game, ShadyPenguinn playfully switches between roles and fluently adapts his stance through changes in play style and strategies, using surprises to his own benefit.

Constraints and community

I have stated in my introduction that a LPer's playfulness is visible in his attitude towards his mix of familiar roles and the way he deals with the constraints that brings. Thus, in order to shed more light on ShadyPenguinn's playfulness in his videos, it is necessary to articulate what we understand by a YouTube community and how it forms constraints in a LPers performance and play. We need to understand what role the constraints of maintaining such a community plays in sense of play style.

In their article *Online Communities: Focusing on Sociability and Usability*, Preece and Maloney-Krichmar propose a model for the design of online communities. The model is based on a couple of elements they believe to be central to digital communities. There is no one definition of online communities, as Wellman rightfully

states that scholars have struggled with the definition of community for over 50 years (Wellman et al., 2002, p. 153). However, there are core elements such as reciprocity and network theory that help us understand what communities are based on. In online and offline communities' reciprocity, the idea that a person invests and receives something in return, is important to members of a community. Feelings of belonging to a group, inclusion, and mutuality are a glue that tie communities together (Preece & Maloney-Krichmar, pp. 16-17). Indeed, through many scholarly articles of Wellman, Hillery and Preece we find that the concept of community is hard to define concretely, however at the core of the notion is a sense of inclusion and a feeling of belonging. As Wellman et al. describe, the 'traditional' form of community as a neighbourhood is essentially gone. In online communities, people usually do not see or hear any other member of the group. Some people argue that because of the loss of this non-verbal communication leads to the fact that it is not possible to have a true community online where people support each other with kinship at its core. Yet, I argue that people using social media usually do not feel that this is a heavy loss of communication. Rather, it is a different form that now shapes online communities. "A space becomes a place when it has social meaning…checking into a new place was a way of place making or creating social and personal meanings with a new city...and to build a sense of connection and familiar to a new place" (Özkul, 2015). In this sense, online gathering locations are to be taken with the same weight as if they were a physical room. Moreover, Allen et al. describe many positives that online communication brings for people aside from the negatives. Many people with social anxiety issues are able to have meaningful social interactions through social media, whereas otherwise they would not have any contact at all. Furthermore, the anonymity found through online communications tends to make people feel that they can express their feelings and opinions more openly (Allen et al., 2014, p. 23, 24). On

top of that, Allen et al. Take from research provided by Davis, Baymeister & Leary and Nurullah that young people, approximately the age of the target audience of ShadyPenguinn, who's need to feel connected with peers is increased, find that this need is fulfilled by social media's potential to stay in touch. Connectedness seems to be able to increase the sense of belonging to a group (Allen et al., 2014, p. 21). This connectedness, Turkle (2011) among others argues, is created by the idea that all members of a community such as ShadyPenguinn's share a specific interest and gather at the same (online) location to express that interest. This idea creates an 'illusion of fellowship', which we now understand to lie at the core of online communities.

For the YouTube community of ShadyPenguinn, the common topic is the new Pokémon games for the Nintendo 3DS. On his channel, gameplay content is presented and discussed through videos and their comments. In fact, play takes a crucial role in the dynamics in such Let's Play community. For Johan Huizinga, play is a voluntary activity, given form by a set of rules within the realm of an included group of people, implementing the element of secrecy to it (Huizinga, p. 12). He called this space in which play occurs the 'magic circle'. The idea is that play only takes place within the magic circle and as soon as participants leaves the space of play or break the rules, they exit the magic circle. Thus, the set of rules are what make the game available for interaction and renegotiation. For Jesper Juul, formally defined rules and evaluation of the efforts of the players are at the core of video games. Video game rules do not merely form the game, but also add complexity and interesting dynamics (Juuls, 2001). In a video game, rules decide what is possible and what is not. Playing is defined by the renegotiations of these rules. Players can explore the ends of these limitations and utilizing them in a way they seem fit. Understanding the rules by heart and knowing exactly the extent of possibilities results in optimized gameplay. In the MDA

(Mechanics, Dynamics, Aesthetics) framework by Hunicke et al. mechanics are that what might be called rules and constraints. Mechanics are the basic workings of a game, such as walking, or money value in an economy element of the game. Mechanics are usually quantifiable or easily measurable, and are often quite precise (Hunicke et al. 2004, p. 3). In the Pokémon game, mechanics include the Pokémon's Hit Points (HP), attacking power and defensive points. They also include the number of attacks a Pokémon and are at the core of how damage (reduction of HP, an essential element in the game) is calculated.

Tadhg Kelly, separates rules into three different groups. Constants are rules that are usually limitations from the external of the game. Such limitation can be a platform, such as the number of buttons on a joypad or the computational power of the computer system. Also limitations of psychology or the resolution of a TV screen are constants. Conditions are triggered by player actions. They are rules that state that if the player takes a certain action, it causally results into certain conditions. Examples of these conditions are taking damage or death. Another example is that a used weapon breaks or that if one sneaks instead of walks, the enemies in a video game take notice, which would result in the condition of battle. In short, constraints are rules that prevail throughout the whole game. They decide what are possible actions for players and what the boundaries are. Such can be the weight of the ball in soccer or the number of cards in a deck (Kelly, 2011). These type of rules are naturally related. Mastering the constraints and getting used to the constants of a game result in the player being able to control the conditions of the video game, which includes the goal. Some argue that this exploration of rules and constraints that govern virtual space is the essence of playing video games.

An example of such constraints in Pokémon are the characters and the values of attack moves. constraints and constants maximize his control over achieving this goal. In Kelly's article, constraints are thought to be the typical rule set or 'physics' of the game. The game world decides what a player can and can't do, which constraints the player physically. Inclusion of performance changes the constants and adds constraints to playing the game. For instance, ShadyPenguinn can be asked by the audience to use certain Pokémon in his team, which adds a constraint, leaving him with a self-opposed rule programmed in the video game. Certain actions can be taken and decisions can be made pursuing the goal of entertainment that might be opposite to the actions that would be taken in order to achieve the goal of the video game (winning). Thus, like rules, these external elements of performance and community can complicate gameplay and make it more interesting. Renegotiations of these rules, along with adding his own rules and limitations, ShadyPenguinn has multiple ways of interacting with the game, introducing new priorities and goals to create a novel experience for his audience. It is in this carnivalesque attitude towards all rules, goals and expectations that we find the playfulness of an LPer.

Analytical chapter

Method

In this section, I will explain how I intend to do a textual analysis of ShadyPenguinn's videos and what exactly my corpus will be and what the reasons are for that. For my case study on ShadyPenguinn I will use textual analysis. In textual analysis, language and more specifically bodies that are made up of language and symbols are central. Texts do not merely cover the entirety of documents that contain words. Instead, it is a broad concept that includes "literary and visual constructs, employing symbolic means, shaped by rules, conventions and traditions intrinsic to the use of language in its widest sense" (Stuart Hall, in Brennen, p. 192, 193). A textual analysis is a study of texts in order to come to a better understanding of the wider phenomenon of which the text belongs to. (Fernández-Vara, 2015, p. 8,9) LPs can be understood as paratexts to the games that are played within them. Paratext is a term that surrounds what could be seen as the main text. Paratext are usually interpretations, perceptions and experience of this main text. Fernández-Vara argues that not just the main text is valuable as an object of study, but instead argues that these paratexts are also meaningful. (Fernández-Vara, 2015, p. 6). Birke and Christ would agree that paratexts are worthwhile studying, for they form the general culture around the main text (Birke & Christ, 2013, p.81). Thus, conducting a textual analysis helps us to better understand sub-cultures of videogame communities. In my study, I analyse the contents of ShadyPenguinn's videos on the latest official Pokémon main games *Pokémon Sun* and *Pokémon Moon*, which I will treat as my paratexts. The focus of qualitative textual analysis is not merely state what texts include and how accurate they are. Rather, observations are full of interpretations, focusing on how certain texts are written and how (body) language is used to illustrate or create our social realities. The method is heavily influenced by semiotics, also

understood as the study of signs (Brennen, p.196). Using textual analysis as my method, I can analyse the ways and methods in which ShadyPenguinn engages his audience. I can interpret his language and non-verbal communication towards his audience and seek out patterns in order to see how playful attitude to plays a role in concepts like performance and play.

Corpus

In this thesis, I will analyse three of ShadyPenguinn's YouTube videos. All three videos revolve around the latest Pokémon games Pokémon Sun and Moon, even though the Let's Player streams a wider variety of video games. I want to see how ShadyPenguinn, even though he is not considered to be 'one of the best' players out there, he still manages to engage a fair number of people through his LPs. Being part of the Pokémon video game community myself, I know that ShadyPenguinn is a name well known by all active players of the game and frequently watched by many. The three selected videos all have a unique element to them. In the first video ShadyPenguinn challenges another player personally to battle him, making the battle more personal. In another of those videos the theme is 'hotshots' where he picks people's suggestions and decides together with the audience which Pokémon on the team was the 'hotshot' (the best performer within the team). In the last video ShadyPenguinn attempts to climb the competitive ladder, mostly making tactical decisions by himself, after which he requests his audience to give him feedback on his team.

I have chosen three because the aim is to go in depth more than touch the surface of the videos, while the diversity in videos still allow me to illustrate how reconstruction of the video game rules and dynamics, as well as the rules and constraints he puts into his LPs allows for different expressions, resulting in different identity performances.

For all three case studies, I will focus on the content of the videos itself, rather than the comments. My aim is to find patterns in use of language and ways in which he actively engages his audience and encourages the viewers to be active consumers of his videos.

The three videos are constructed using the same video game and thus target the same video game community. However, every video is representative of a common type on ShadyPenguinn's YouTube channel and each type of video adds a new element to the game, thus adding some variety in playful performance. My aim is to connect the ways of playing/attitudes in playing games and identity with the notion of theatrical performance and social communities.

The Game Pokémon

In order to be able to dive into ShadyPenguinn's playfulness throughout his videos we have to understand the way the game works. Not only because it makes it possible to take a critical look at his decision making and his play style, but also to consider the pacing of the game.

In competitive Pokémon, a player battles another player by using Pokémon. In a Pokémon battle a player usually brings a maximum of 6 different Pokémon that are trained to at least level 50.[4] When a match is found either online or local, both players can see each other's team (but not items and moves). Based on this information, both players make a selection of the Pokémon they have brought. If Single Battle mode is chosen, players can each take three Pokémon to battle. In Double Battle mode, each player takes four Pokémon in total of which two of those monsters enter the battlefield simultaneously on each side of the field. When the battle starts, players enter a turn-

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4 In Pokémon games hundreds of different Pokémon can be used. There is a wide variety of types and all with different stats. Even if the Pokémon appears to be the same, it does not have to be; the 4 moves a player is able to give a Pokémon can differ greatly and there is some variety in stats of individual Pokémon, making each Pokémon customizable to some extend.

based battle system in which they have to pick one move every turn per Pokémon on the field. One can choose one out of four moves per Pokémon or choose to swap one Pokémon on the field with one in stock. The ultimate goal is to knock out the other player's Pokémon by reducing its HP (hit points). The first player who runs out of Pokémon to use loses, making the other player the winner.

Structure of the Analysis

In the analysis, I will use Turkle's notion of understanding identities as the exploration of many surfaces. She argues that, if we are not able to reach the core of the self, we must try to understand the self through exploring surfaces. Also part of my analysis will be Brenda Laurel's understanding of computer activity within the metaphor of theatre and performance as explained in the theoretical chapter of this thesis.

For the notion of playful identity, I derive mainly from the books Play Matters and Playful Identities. In the latter, the chapter "Playful identities in Game-design and Open Ended Play" has my particular interest. Mainly because it describes how open ended play invites a more personal take on the game, leaving more room for developing one's identity through playing a video game. Lastly, it connects social networking as an important factor to situating oneself within the game community and performing an identity also through feedback of game and community.

Case Study: ShadyPenguinn

In this part of the thesis, I will analyse three videos of ShadyPenguinn as explained in the corpus section. I have chosen three videos, each of them representative of a common form of LP streams ShadyPenguinn usually makes. I will start by explaining how the video game works, after which I will analyse some overarching patterns. Following on that, I will analyse specific aspects of the three videos mentioned in my corpus.

In order to maintain the focus on the goal of this thesis, I will analyse ShadyPenguinn's communicative strategies through videos on his YouTube channel, so that it becomes clear in which ways he engages his audience. I am aware that nowadays, online communities do not merely exist on a particular online platform, but often transcend the boundaries a single website and even of online and offline spaces (Preece & Maloney-Krichmar, p. 5). In ShadyPenguinn's case, he streams videos live on Twitch and maintains a Twitter and Facebook page. However, it is not my goal to illustrate elements of transmedia of Let's Play communities. Instead, I want to focus on ShadyPenguinn's playful attitude and link this to audience engagement and community maintenance within a single platform. It may be important to keep in mind that the videos the LPer uploads on his YouTube channel are not live streams, but are nonetheless minimally edited.

Overarching patterns

There are many patterns and important elements of his videos that can be found in all of his videos. For example, ShadyPenguinn always starts with the same signature greeting: "what's up Shady people, ShadyPenguinn here, welcome back to..." and ends all of his videos with "...but above all else, keep it shady!". Using the word 'shady' as to brand the content of his videos as well as his own identity, he uses the word on his followers,

creating a sense of belonging and inclusion. It is clear that this LPer tries to include his followers as much as possible and create a sense of community. Another example of this is whenever ShadyPenguinn refers to what he is doing or what is happening to his Pokémon during battles, ShadyPenguinn has no difficulty calling his Pokémon team 'our' Pokémon team, using the word 'we' as often as the word 'I'. It thus seems the interpretation of who is playing the game and who are active is contradictory. This means sometimes the viewer and the LPer become one group that is playing the game together, creating the illusion that his spectators are active participants. At other moments, the audience becomes more distant again, as he takes on the role of a commentator. This paradoxical element makes the relationship between the LPer and the audience more fluent, as ShadyPenguinn playfully and flexibly shifts his perspective to his liking.

Furthermore, ShadyPenguinn frequently asks people to make suggestions, and responds to these in his videos. For instance, one video he might ask "tell me in the comments bellow what you would change on this team!", after which usually follows a video in which he says something like "We brought Salazzle [a Pokémon] today because many of you have been asking for it, so, here he is!". He makes sure always to answer the most frequently asked questions and acting out the community's requests, he makes people feel like they are co-creators of the content. I would like to link this to both the act of inclusion that is at the core of any active community as well as participatory fandom as the way in which consumers have stepped away from their passive stances. Lastly, I want to identify the way in which he plays the game and actively engages with it and how this translates into ShadyPenguinn's playful identity, which helps him maintain a stable fan base and Pokémon sub-community.

Pacing-switching roles

The pacing of the game is important to consider mainly because it predetermines what the player, or in our case the LPer, is occupied with at certain moments. As I explained above about play styles, a player's style of a player depends on the pacing of the game and a player's attitude. While playfulness in attitude is the focus of this thesis, I consider pacing as being an intricate part of that analysis. As Mark Davies (2017) argues, "pacing" is still poorly defined even though it is a term that is discussed frequently when talking about video games. He suggests that there is a lot to learn from musical terminology when discussing pacing in games. While the concept is not well refined, there is something to say for considering a game's "flow" (melody). It can be used to understand the tempo of the game, but also to analyse repetitiveness of actions and consider time spans of notes (actions) and rests (time in between actions). Since Pokémon is turn-based rather than a real time action game, it gives players more time to reflect on what happens each turn and gives them time to think.

The duration of a Pokémon battle usually takes about 10 minutes. Each player has a maximum amount of time for picking moves of 10 minutes in total. Players get a total of 45 seconds each turn to make a decision. After making decisions, the players watch the results of the decisions both players made, after which it is time to make another move. Because of this play system, players find themselves constantly switching between decision making (action) and waiting to see how the turn results. Like a clock's pendulum, ShadyPenguinn switches between being an active player and acting as a commentator. He uses most of his time during the battle Pokémon players would usually be idle during a battle to reflect and commentate, while thinking aloud during the time he has to decide his moves.
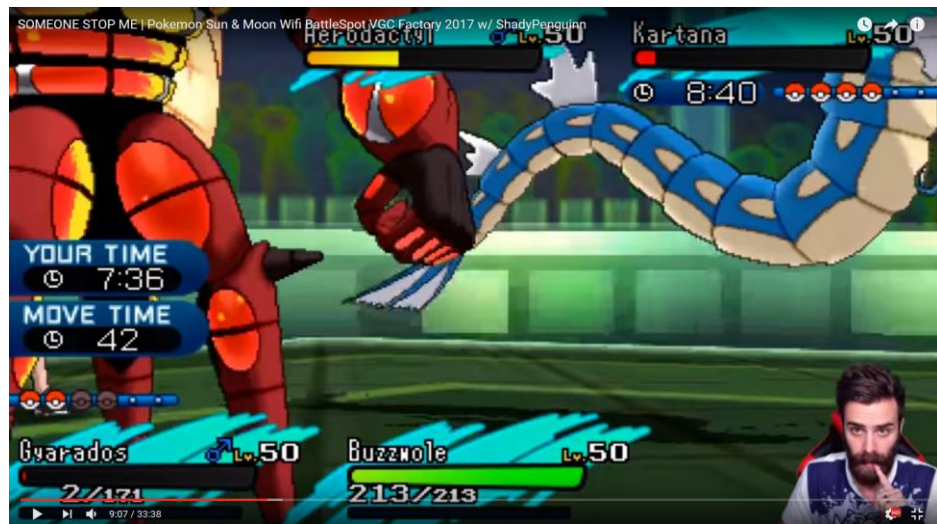
Figure 1. ShadyPenguinn switches from player to commentator in a split second.

For instance, in a video of ShadyPenguinn of Pokémon Sun and Moon VGC Factory, where his aim is to climb the ladder, he first thinks his actions aloud:

"It does not matter... I'm going to Waterfall... I do not want to run...Let's Brick Break the Kartana...". Then he switches immediately to his role of spectator/commentator: "We see Rock Slide, actually. We can dodge that, man! Taking risks! … Smart Strike coming through! … Down goes the Kartana! We have a chance!". Right after the match, there is a break between the matches in which he reflects upon the last match and summarizes what happened, discussing what went right and what went wrong like a sports commentator would (see figure 1). As discussed in the theoretical section of this thesis, Miguel Sicart argues that nowadays many designs are invested to look like something different from what is traditionally expected of them (Sicart, 2014, p. 19-20). Like a mobile phone often taking the role of a pocket watch, this gameplay broadcaster also gives his own commentary. It is not unlike the image of a football player giving commentary of the game while also playing on the field, only the nature as well as pacing would not allow this.

VGC Battle Factory – learning the game together

As discussed above, in VGC Battle Factory videos, ShadyPenguinn aims to climb the ladder. His main goal is to become better at competitive Pokémon. In these videos, ShadyPenguinn's attitude towards the game is more serious and attracts viewers that also try to become a better competitive player. The LPer tries to make the best decisions in order to win the game, attempting to anticipate his opponent's moves, going through chances and details of the game. ShadyPenguinn may not be the best player out there, but he is not bad at the game either. When he makes a mistake in battle he tells himself what he has learned, after which he advices the audience to learn from his mistakes. Turkle (2011) among others has linked this collective goal and interest to a sense of belong, calling it an illusion of fellowship. This type of video serves thus to underline this collective purpose, strengthening the ShadyPenguinn community.

After he loses his first battle in the video in figure 1, ShadyPenguinn tells his audience: "Let's do another one, maybe we can snag a "W" [win]. As long as you guys are learning something. What I learned is... stop over predicting!". The interaction between the LPer and his audience becomes one of a joint learning experience. Instead of the viewers who play themselves going through battles by themselves to learn how to play, a lot of them prefer to do the learning process through ShadyPenguinn, who makes the mistakes for them. the anonymity found through online communications tends for people to feel they can express their feelings and opinions more openly and feel free to interact where they otherwise would not (Allen et al., 2014, p. 23, 24). His audience can watch him and feel his integrity as though were a friend, while keeping a save distance by watching from home.

It is here that we do see him switching between and mixing the roles of player and entertainer, but he does not try to make strange moves or be exceptionally creative

in order to entertain. His goal is to play as effectively as possible and to make the moves that give him the best chances to reach his goal. As the attitude towards the game becomes more serious, his play style also becomes rigid, and not much creativity comes into play. Here, the entertaining factor derives less from playfulness and more from enthusiasm, creative word play and a sense of going through the learning process together.

Sense of closeness – battle against a friend

In all of ShadyPenguinn's videos and like in many LP videos, the LPer appears on camera in the corner of the screen while presenting the audience with gameplay content. Not his whole body is visible; the camera is aimed on his face and upper body/arms in order to show his audience his emotional expressions. Psychologists have argued for years that non-verbal communication account for approximately 90% of all emotions conveyed. For example, in articles such as The Quest's "Waarom Internetdaten niet werkt [Why Internet dating does not work]" in the issue of January 2017, scholars argue that 90% of all emotions conveyed through social media is misinterpreted or are lost.[5] It is no wonder then, that the LPer is visible at all times in order to appeal more to the viewer's emotion. Peters and Seier (2009) argue that the use of the camera bridges some of the actual distance between the YouTuber and the viewer. In ShadyPenguinn's case, he looks into the camera often when talking to his audience, which makes it possible to create the illusion as though he is speaking to the viewer directly. They further argue that for becoming successful on YouTube, aiming for a professional setting is not necessary. Moreover, I would argue that it is in the LPer's interest to appear casual and keep a "from home" atmosphere to the camera content, as it resonates more with the

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5 The Quest is a popular scientific magazine in The Netherlands.

average viewer. After all, the videos are not only about gameplay content or the presentation of it, but also the emotional connection the YouTuber creates with his audience.

In the video WE TALKING BEASTS Vs Sacred! | Pokémon Sun & Moon Live Wifi Battle w/ ShadyPenguinn [002] (November 27, 2016), ShadyPenguinn invites a friend to battle him on stream. While he might as well just go online and find people at random, he adds an element of familiarity when fighting a friend, giving the viewer an impression of inclusion into ShadyPenguinn's personal life. While his friend does not appear on screen or is even in direct conversation with the LPer, he still sometimes addresses him directly. He does not talk to him directly all throughout the video though, as he treats his friend as absent or present when he deems fit (figure 2).

Figure 2. ShadyPenguinn talks to his friend 'RushSF', addressing him directly as though he were in his presence: "I wanna see your face!"

It is at these moments when ShadyPenguinn speaks to his friend directly that the viewer is under the illusion of being part of a social happening between friends; it feels as though ShadyPenguinn, RushSF and his viewers at that point are all present in the same room, even though the conversations are one-sided. He creatively alternates between whom he is speaking to, creating a social dynamic that is actually largely imaginary.

Eline Oosterloo

Glynn and Webster have introduced the Adult Playfulness scale, which suggest that playfulness can be tested in adults by testing five different facets: spontaneity, expressiveness, fun/entertaining, creativeness and silliness (Glynn and Webster, 1992). It is this peculiar kind of divergence and flexibility that points out to ShadyPenguinn's playfulness towards concepts of social interactivity. Indeed, this LPer has a playful attitude towards not only the video game, but towards entertaining his viewers as well.

Not only is he speaking to his friend who is not actually watching at that moment, he does so with great expressiveness. "I gotta back up here!", ShadyPenguinn says with glee in his voice. He backs up and looks up. It is here we can see the importance of the camera footage. It is a dramatic reaction one would expect to see in a play.

Another element that adds to a feeling of closeness compared to ShadyPenguinn's other types of videos is that in games against friends, the Pokémon's nicknames appear on the screen. At this point, the LPer barely calls the Pokémon by their original name any more and addresses them as "Lil Snoop" instead of "Zygarde" and "Jiminy" instead of "Tapu Koko". Here, "Lil Snoop" refers to the popular rapper Snoop Dog, and "Jiminy" to the cricket from Disney's Pinocchio. Nicknaming your Pokémon is part of the main game, though these nicknames are only visible offline or when interacting with friends and is not compulsory. It is an element often connected to the idea of naming your pet, creating an instant deeper emotional connection to that specific Pokémon. Nicknaming Pokémon to refer to characters from other games and media adds to the facet of silliness and creativity. Using nicknames and speaking to his friend directly are both elements that can only be found in this type of ShadyPenguinn's videos. It means that in his battle against his friend, he bridges even more distance than he would in his other LPs.

Hotshots – experiencing play through others

In the third video, called "Salazzle Potential! | Pokémon Sun & Moon Wifi BattleSpot Hotshot w/ ShadyPenguinn [006]", ShadyPenguinn takes six Pokémon that people have requested in the comment sections of his videos. He will fight a total of three battles with that team, after which the audience decides which team member performed best and earns the name of "Hotshot". This means the LPer is no longer focused on the goal of winning, but that he has to work with what he has got. In every Hotshot episode ShadyPenguinn makes sure that every Pokémon gets a chance to proof itself. It means that sometimes, even when using a specific Pokémon is not ideal, he will have to commit to that Pokémon just because every single one of that team has to appear in the video. This is an external constraint to the game that is not just an inconvenience. Rules and constraints do not merely form the game, but also add complexity and interesting dynamics (Juuls, 2001). By implementing external rules such the one described above, ShadyPenguinn adds a new dynamic to his gameplay by trying to find a way to mix trying to win and using every Pokémon in battle. He shows his playfulness by finding creative and refreshing ways to play the game and approach it from different angles.

Furthermore, by creating this type of video, he shows that he does not only spontaneously ask people for suggestions and ideas (see figure 3), but also incorporates their them in his videos.

Figure 3. ShadyPenguinn tells his community to "...seriously, leave me some suggestions down below"

By doing so, ShadyPenguinn shows not only that he does indeed read the comment section to read the answers to his questions. He let's his audience know that he listens to his followers, making them part of the process of play, even though they do not actually play. This makes the audience feel like they are immersed within the game, without actually taking part of in the act. Cheung and Huang call this the viewer's paradox, which emphasizes the emotional connection spectators experience through the immersion in play through others (Cheung & Huang, 2011, p. 2-3). Though in this case the audience is not merely spectating, but engage in real interaction with the LPer. This dynamic is what is called reciprocity. In online and offline communities, reciprocity, the idea that a person invests and in receives something in return, is important to members of a community. Feelings of belonging to a group, inclusion, and mutuality that result from reciprocity are a glue that tie communities together (Preece & Maloney-Krichmar, pp.

16-17). ShadyPenguinn thus again shows his playful attitude in taking on a mix between the familiar roles of commentator, player and community leader and mixes favoured elements of these roles in order to create a unique experience that we now find in a wide variety of LPs.

This unique dynamic is thus created through playfully reinventing the game and add new challenges and constraints through interaction with the LPer's audience. The constraint that comes with playing the game with influence of his viewers adds a new challenge, which he uses to add a refreshing dynamic to his gameplay footage. It also gives him the chance to slow down on the intense analysis of the game. A Hotshot is not chosen for any quantifiable reason, such as beating the highest number of Pokémon. Instead, the Hotshot is chosen through feelings and emotional responses. For instance, halfway through the video, Salazzle takes out an enemy Pokémon in one hit. It would probably not have happened if the Pokémon didn't make a critical hit.[4] It is not a reliable element in a Pokémon that does not specialize in critical hit chance and should rationally not be a reason to say that a certain Pokémon is the best Pokémon. However, in this video it delivered a great emotional reaction, leaving the Pokémon to become the Hotshot of the day (see figure 4).

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4 You have to be lucky to get a critical hit. Under normal circumstances there is only a 6.25% chance of a Pokémon landing a critical hit.
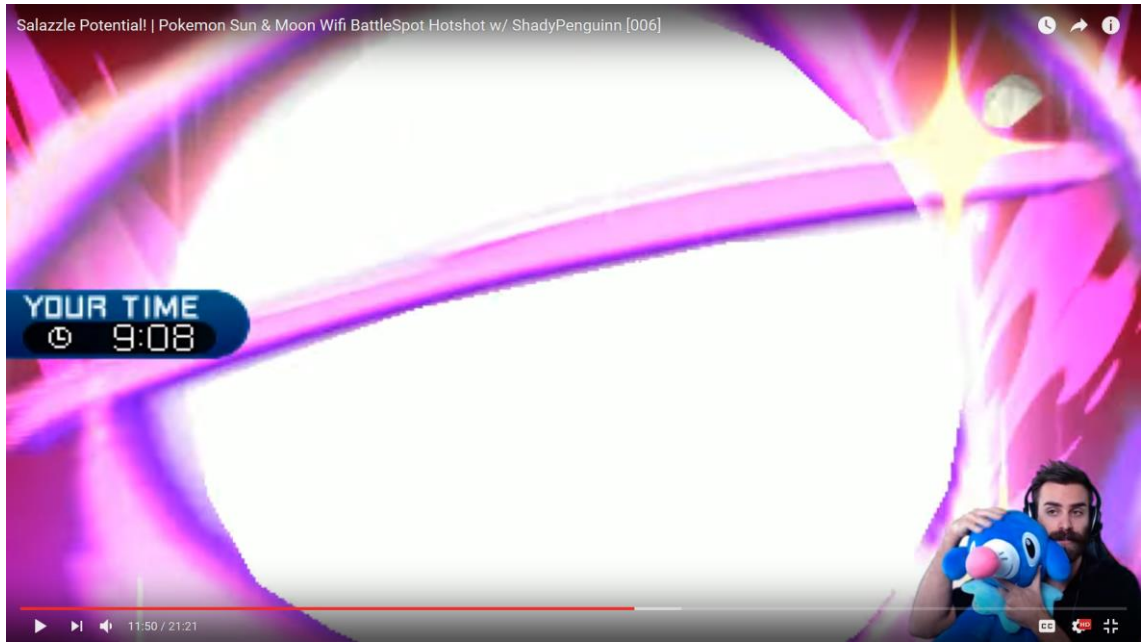
Figure 4. ShadyPenguinn cuddles his pluche to create an emotional moment with the "Hotshot" of the day.

The Hotshot of the day is thus not necessarily the Pokémon that performed best, but the Pokémon on the field that created a climax, both in gameplay and emotionally. As Cheung and Huang argue, commentators are able to convey emotions and excitement through their comments; the commentator leads the audience through collective tension and relieve (Cheung & Huang, 2011, p. 6). Again, we see that LPs are not centred around the gameplay content but around the LPer himself. It is up to him to decide when he emotionally expresses himself more strongly and when he does not, steering the audience's response to his liking in order to pull of a good performance.

Conclusion

In this thesis, my aim has been to bring a new perspective to understanding Let's Play videos and to operationalize the concept of playful attitude. My goal was to show how ShadyPenguinn engages his audience through playful attitude. A playful attitude is a psychological and emotional approach to things and situations that aren't necessarily play. It is an attitude, not an action. However, as we have seen through my analysis of ShadyPenguinn's LPs, a playful attitude can be traced through an LPer's actions. I have analysed ShadyPenguinn's playfulness within his role as a player and entertainer, as he creatively mixes elements of them together and switches between them flexibly. The pacing of the game makes this possible, as a slow paced, turn-based strategy game such as Pokémon leaves much room for comments and leaves the LPer's hands free to express his emotions more clearly. This is made possible due to the fact that the camera always shows the LPer in the corner of the screen, bridging some of the distance between de performer and his audience. The audience experiences the video game through ShadyPenguinn, becoming part of the game itself. In the first video we saw how the goal of climbing the ladder made ShadyPenguinn's play style more serious and less silly. Though he is a decent player, ShadyPenguinn is not the best. He takes his audience through his videos into a joint learning experience, enhancing the sense of a common goal and interest. This is linked to Turkle's illusion of fellowship and strengthens the ShadyPenguinn community.

In the second video ShadyPenguinn invites a friend, adding to the informality factor of the experience. Here, ShadyPenguinn doesn't just playfully alternate between addressing himself with "I" and "we", switching between the role of player and entertainer, but also directly spontaneously addresses an imagined version of his friend directly, as though the audience, LPer and friend were situated in the same space. It

creates a notion of togetherness through the safety of the audience's homes. Battling a friend also allows for nicknames to appear on the screen, after which ShadyPenguinn calls them by their nicknames for the rest of the video. Most nicknames refer to characters that are not part of the Pokémon game itself, which makes it whimsical and silly, adding a personal touch the video game experience. According to Glynn and Webster, these facets of silliness and expressiveness serve as tools to analyse a person's playfulness.

Furthermore, in the third video that I analysed, another element was added to change the LP experience. Here, ShadyPenguinn takes his viewer's suggestions and forges a team from it. The goal here is not merely to win the game, but also show all the Pokémon on the screen within a single video, giving every Pokémon a chance to proof itself. It is of utmost importance for ShadyPenguinn here to show all suggestions, as it expresses respect for his audience's choices and efforts, showing that he listens to them and takes them seriously. This interaction between audience and LPer adds the element of reciprocity, which has been accepted as one of the core building blocks of communities by Preece and Maloney-Krichmar (2003).

I further argued that by playfully approaching the game, introducing external constraints, ShadyPenguinn creates a new dynamic through play. The decision of who the Hotshot is, is not chosen by rational reason, but is strongly suggested through exaggerated emotional climaxes of the LPer's performance. He uses his expressions and outburst to guide his audience's into collective tensions and relieves, playfully anticipating certain occurrences.

Thus, ShadyPenguinn engages his audience playfully through pushing the boundaries of familiar roles and using elements from theatre to entertain his audience. Here, expressiveness and emotional investment create tension spans and make the

Eline Oosterloo

videos more personal. Humour is found in silliness, creative use of words and exaggerated emotional outbursts. Through introducing new constraints by letting the audience become more part of the act of play, ShadyPenguinn adds unique dynamics that give a refreshing perspective towards the video game. While some external constraints may invite an air of seriousness and joint learning, as is the case in video one, other constraints invite more whimsical and silly play, as is the case in video three.

Discussion

In this thesis, I have analysed the playful attitude of one single LPer, within three videos. This means that the observed and interpreted elements of the videos and ways in which he uses his playful attitude to engage his audience might differ from ways other LPers engage their audience. Let's Play videos have been analysed through concepts of theatre and performance before, however, the notion of playfulness gives us fresh perspective when analysing the phenomenon Let's Play and allows us to better understand the unique dynamic between audience and performer through these videos. It would be interesting to apply this method of analysis to a wider variety of LPers and find common similarities.

This thesis furthermore did not dive into the realm of editing videos for comic effects. It would be interesting go more in depth into video editing of online videos in terms of playfulness. Also, other platforms could be taken into account, such as Twitch, where the fact that videos are streams live and comments appear during stream add another element to LP videos.

Let's Play videos have become a popular cultural phenomenon over the last decade. Many people watch these videos online, joining these community driven channels. Playfulness is a concept that dominates our every day life. Many things are made to be playful in their design, giving the impression to be something other then they are. An underlying cultural shift towards playfulness is at the core of the development of this cultural phenomenon; we now seek the intimate, emotional and fun through things which are not intrinsically designed to be so. Let's Players have been analysed as performer centred and in terms of theatre and performance. It is useful to translate these traditional notions to LPs, as they shed light on the similarities with older phenomenon, which disillusions us from the idea that any such phenomenon is truly 'new'. However,

it is important to understand that Let's Players add a novel element to that those familiar forms in the form of playfulness, approaching the traditional through a different lens. After all, that what seems new usually exists of familiar elements, forged into a refreshing combination.

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Eline Oosterloo

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