Ryan Young

# Voice in Virtual Worlds: The Design, Use, and Influence of Voice Chat in Online Play

This article examines the influence that that vocal communication has on the experience in interactive media in a virtual space. In particular, it analyzes the effect that the use of vocal communication over text communication and how the effect influences the experience when engaging in activities with other people in a virtual space and the social effects. The study is conducted on different virtual spaces, each of which are of a combination of cooperative and competitive environments. This study discovers that compared to only text communications, which were also available for comparison in each case, the use of vocal communications exclusively instead helped make virtual spaces more socially intense, allowing for greater degrees of interaction with others. There are significant downsides however, as the study concludes that there are a variety of issues that arise from the introduction of vocal communication, which include problems such as the the loss of anonymity, impression management, message ambiguity, and depending on what situation it is implemented having extremely negative effects to the social experience instead. Furthermore, simply having a global voice channel in a virtual is an extremely poor choice, as the variety of advantages and disadvantages that this form of communication differs greatly depending on the community and environment. The increased emphasis on rapid communication and social presence can also turn many users away from joining ongoing or future social interactions with the community, or reject the virtual space entirely. This article is an excellent study into the two most prevalent forms of communication in a virtual space within a community, text and voice. By analysing the advantages and disadvantages voice communication brings to social interactions as well as comparing the environmental variables with the differing results, the resulting conclusions and data will prove invaluable in the research space of *finding a community*. Communication is an essential component of both finding and entering a community, and remaining within one.