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*Counter-Strike: Global Offensive and What a Discourse Group Looks Like.*

*Counter-Strike: Global Offensive*, commonly abbreviated CS:GO, CSGO, or just CS, is the fourth major installment of the highly competitive, and multiplayer focused *Counter-Strike* series. Being a multiplayer centric game, it is home to a very large community, peaking at over 600,000 players (Steam: Game and Player Statistics). Being one of the most popular games on Valve Software’s distribution platform, Steam allows the players to have many mediums to effectively communicate their goals. Being a team-oriented game allows for the group to have many goals outside of just personal enjoyment, which is the overarching group goal. Also, being a strategic, team oriented, and timed game has caused the community to develop its own language; being a game of fast reaction, you need to know callouts of enemy locations and the like very quickly, or you will be prone to die. I believe this makes the community surrounding *Counter-Strike* to be a prime example of a proper discourse community.

As a player of *Counter-Strike*, I can confirm there are many goals. Some short term, and some long term. Some personal, and some for your team. The most basic goal is to just have fun and enjoy the game. This is the overarching goal for the community. As swales laid out in his definition of a discourse community, it needs to have a set of agreed public goals. While it is a personal goal, it is agreed by the community to enjoy yourself; no one is going to play the game or become a part of the community if they hate it. When you add on to that, you also have ranking for competitive match-making. Determined by a hidden number called Elo (Elo doesn’t stand for anything, it’s the last name of the guy who created the system). It is a goal of many to increase your rank, and overall become better at the game. To talk about team goals there has to be a distinction made. In CS, you have two kinds of teams; the team you play with inside the game: consisting of 5 players. There are also professional teams, or a group of people who play the game professionally. They may or may not have more than 5 people and a manager. These two different types of teams have different goals. The in-game kind goals are to win sixteen out of the thirty, two-minute rounds. The teams outside of the game, however, are planning on improving their skill in the game or winning championship events. However, a lot of these goals are unofficial public goals, also filling swales definition of group goals. I believe anyone who is a part of the community of semi-serious about the game wants to both enjoy the game and become better, which is another shared and agreed upon goal of the community.

There are many mediums to communicate about the goals discussed about the game, both quick communication (such as in-game communication) and long-term (such as threads on forums and message boards). As swales stated in his 4th point, a discourse community needs to have and utilize at least one medium to communicate the public goals. In-game you have the ability to type in a chat box to communicate with both your team and the other team (if you wish), or you can use a microphone to communicate with your team. Outside of the game you have many communities to talk about various moments people had, effective strategies and theory about the game itself, usually in the form of a message board or social site such as Reddit. These mediums are specifically dedicated to communication about the game, and nothing else. Keeping that in mind, it means the mediums were created specifically for the game and the discourse community. The communication done through these mediums also possess Swales 5th principle, that is, it utilizes many lexis in the mediums of communication.

As stated, CS is a very fast paced game, and with that comes a fast language meant to communicate as fast as possible. To someone who does not play, the following sentence: “AWP long A, don’t peek” will not make any sense. However, someone may have just saved a teammates life because what they have stated is there is an enemy with the most powerful sniper rifle in the game, down the longest route to bombsite A (There’s usually 2 or 3 routes to a bombsite, each of varying length), and do not show yourself to him. “Tech 9 Rush B” is a phrase you may hear a lot, in less than five words someone has communicated a strategy for a whole round. What he has said is “Buy a Tech 9 [Cheap 1-st round pistol], and push bombsite B as fast as possible”. What’s really neat about this language is it’s the one thing used in all mediums CS is discussed on. While in-game callouts (ex. Bomb A. Rotate) will be different from stories people share (ex. I was pushing mid when I got pop-flashed….), the language is the same throughout. This fits for the definition of having a special lexis. Swales mentions that as an outsider in a discourse group, because of the lexical terms used in one, it may be hard to understand. I think the language of CS is very hard to understand at first and fits that idea very well.

To be part of this discourse community, you don’t need to be an avid player. All you have to do is be an avid fan. A few rounds of playing, and some discussion on the game and you learn the language pretty fast, and even if you don’t play you can still be a member of the discourse community. One thing that is popular is to follow the professional scene. Consisting of big name teams of player such as *Cloud9* and *Ninjas in Pyjamas*, the competitive (play-for-money) scene is very popular. Popular enough that players have their own fandom. People like *KennyS* and *f0rest* have spawned faux stories about them, similar to what you’d see from fans of contemporary sports. Some people end up only ever watching competitive CS, but never actually play. Just like someone can be involved with a discourse community about football, by only watching it. Whether or not someone is an avid fan, or an avid player, or even just a casual player. We are all part of the same Discourse group: The fans and followers of the game. The only reason you’d want to understand how this discourse community works is if you want to become a player, or a member. This community is not one you have to actively seek outa membership to, nor are there any expectations. It’s just the community that forms around the game. Just like a contemporary sport, such as football, there’s a community that surrounds the game. Outside of the game, the only application is the teamwork you learn that is highly intertwined into the game. So the only reason to look at this community as a discourse community is if you want to become an active member. For example, If you understand that the language has many lexical terms, and you go out of your way to learn them, you will become better at the game faster, than the person who just queues for a game without understanding the language. So unless you are looking to become a member, there is not a whole lot of point of studying the community, however I still believe it to be a prime definition because it fit every point that a discourse community has, as Swales laid out.