Functional shift and semantic change
in *Lord of the Rings Online*
Abstract

The purpose of this essay is to identify functional shifts and semantic changes in the Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game *Lord of the Rings Online*. The focus is on new uses of established terms in Standard English and the intent is to see how the word formation processes work in an online gaming environment, and identify the possible reasons behind them. Due to the lack of previous studies of language in Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games, the aim is to provide some insight into some of the language developments that occur in such an environment. A quantitative method has been utilised in order to distinguish patterns, and the material, in the form of chat logs, has been gathered from *Lord of the Rings Online*. The chat logs have then been used to create a corpus, and, from this point, a qualitative method has been employed. The corpus has been thoroughly analysed for the words which have undergone functional shifts and/or semantic changes, and a selection of these words are presented and discussed based on word formation process. The findings in this study seem to confirm that language changes in a Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game follow the same patterns as in other environments.

Keywords: Semantic change, functional shift, LotRO, MMORPG, English, pejoration, word formation process, metaphorical extension, amelioration, widening, denominal verbs.
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1. Introduction

My fairy lord, this must be done with haste,
For night's swift dragons cut the clouds full fast,
And yonder shines Aurora's harbinger;
At whose approach, ghosts, wandering here and there,
Troop home to churchyards: damned spirits all,
That in crossways and floods have burial,
Already to their wormy beds are gone;
For fear lest day should look their shames upon,
They willfully themselves exile from light
And must for aye consort with black-brow’d night.

*A Midsummer Night's Dream*

As the above quote from William Shakespeare shows, the English language has undergone many changes over the centuries (Barber et al. 2009:37). Shakespeare himself introduced a great number of new words in the English language, many of them created through functional shift such as the denominal verb *troop* in the quote. The reasons for these linguistic changes vary, but social and cultural change motivates most of them as a society needs new words for new things and concepts (Barber et al. 2009:46). Cultural expansion, for example, infuses a language with new terminology. In the ongoing evolution of the English language, there have been changes in pronunciation, word order and meaning, among other things.

It seems that languages change more rapidly at some points in history than others. For instance, due to the widespread use of the Internet, word formation today is very productive. English is, at present, the dominating lingua franca on the Internet, which is one of the reasons for the particularly active production of new styles and forms in English (Warschauer et al 2010:490). Many of the newly generated words are entered into Standard English dictionaries (Herring 2011:4) and are incorporated quickly into the modern vocabulary. The possibility to meet in online forums and chat rooms, no matter where in the world you are, also entails possibilities of using the English language in unforeseen ways. In a Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game (MMORPG) such as *Lord of the Rings Online* (*LotRO*), there are numerous situations where people from all over the world have an opportunity to interact and communicate with each other. It can therefore be seen as an ideal platform for using words in new ways, and thereby developing the English language further.
The development of English in this kind of environment is often due to a play with words, much as Shakespeare used words in new and often playful ways in his time. There is often a playful tone in the interaction which allows players to “create new words in order to perform a function that in most cases cannot be expressed in Standard English” (Morales 2010:11). The use of Standard English words in new context can create unexpected but quite logical formations. Even if Shakespeare used a more poetic form of English, allowing him a greater freedom of expression, similar word play from the users of the Internet can result in forms that are eventually adopted into Standard English.

Data published by the Entertainment Software Association (ESA) suggest that the average player of computer and video games is around 30 years old and has been playing for about twelve years (2012). Both men and women seem to be equally engaged in online games that involve some form of role-playing. Even though these numbers are based on the U.S. gaming population only, they show the tendency and the diversity of player demographics overall. For the most part, developers and publishers of MMORPGs do not openly disclose the demographics of their players, and many are reluctant even to reveal exactly how many players there are in a game or on a specific server. However, the data gathered by ESA provide some hints regarding the most popular MMORPGs, too. The mix of genders and age groups that, based on the ESA data, can be assumed to interact in MMORPGs gives a stability to the gaming community regarding language and conduct, as opposed to a Massively Multiplayer Online (MMO) intended for a younger target audience. A community with this diversity also has a potentially greater influence on language use outside the game world. The blending of registers from outside and inside the game gives a new dimension to the spoken and written language alike (Nilsson 2009:10). This makes an MMORPG interesting to study if the aim is to find more acceptable forms of language change.

The context of interaction determines language use to a considerable extent. Some words will not translate into any other situation, but will be part of the register of the online gaming community only, for example. Based on a previous, more comprehensive study (Norlin 2013), the present study will focus on the development of words through functional shift and semantic change in a gaming environment. The study concentrates on lexical items that are already established as part of the English vocabulary but are used in a new context — and in the process take on new forms and meanings. The aim of this study is presented in section 2, followed by the definitions of functional shift and semantic change, as well as an introduction to LotRO, in section 3. Method and material are explained in section 4, including
a brief discussion of the ethical aspects. The results of the study are presented and discussed in section 5, and section 6 concludes the essay.

2. Aim
The purpose of this essay is to find instances of functional shift and semantic change in a gaming environment, namely *The Lord of the Rings Online*. Studying the use of established words in a new context can provide information about how the properties of a word can develop in an unexpected direction. In my previous study (Norlin 2013), most of the different word formation processes occurring in *LotRO* were investigated, and functional shift and semantic change were determined to be among the most frequently used processes. One of the issues noted, however, was the problem of deciding the exact word formation process in use, as there were often more than one involved simultaneously. The present study will offer a more in-depth analysis of the development of new words through functional shift and semantic change, taking into account how a word can develop and change in a specific environment.

3. Theoretical background
3.1 Functional shift
Functional shift, or *conversion* as it is also called, is the process where a word converts from one syntactic category, that is, word class or part of speech, to another without any change to the form of the word (Brinton and Brinton 2010:101, Finegan 2004:56). It is one of the most common and productive word formation processes in Modern English as there do not seem to be any restrictions regarding the forms that can be converted (Brinton and Brinton 2010:226, Calvert and Baron n.d:3). In Old English, this was not possible in the same way due to the much more extensive use of inflections at that time (Barber et al 2009:234); instead, affixation and compounding were used to a higher degree.

Functional shift occurs, for example, when the noun *water* becomes the verb *to water*, or when an adjective, as in *the ideal person*, turns into a noun, as in *my ideal*. In some instances even phrasal verbs can become nouns, as when the verb phrase *to take over* turns into the noun *a takeover* (Yule 2010:57). When a word has shifted category in this manner to a new word class, it will use the inflections appropriate for the new class, such as *watered* (past verb tense) and *takeovers* (plural noun form). Also, when a word is converted in this way, it can change significantly in meaning. An example is how the noun *a doctor* is different in meaning and sense from the verb *to doctor* (Yule 2010:58).
The most common form of functional shift is from noun to verb, and this seems to have been the case even in the days of Shakespeare: 65% of Shakespearian conversions are of this type (Thierry et al. 2008:924). Morales, for instance, states that “noun to verb conversion is one of the most common resources used by players in *World of Warcraft* (2010:15). It is estimated that one fifth of all the verbs in English originate from nouns and that this is a process that has had an impact on English grammar for centuries (Calvert and Baron n.d.:3). Clark and Clark mention that these so-called denominal verbs usually have “an approximate relationship to their ‘parent’ nouns, from which they were historically derived” (1979:768). From a historical perspective, this relationship might be difficult to identify due to the original meaning of the noun being lost. However, in this study, any connection to the ‘parent’ noun is expected to be apparent where this particular process is applicable.

3.2 Semantic change

When the meaning of an existing word changes without a simultaneous change of word class it is called semantic change (Finegan 2004:56). These changes are normally neither foreseeable nor ordered, and the causes of such a change can be found outside of language, as in developments in technology, society, religion and so on. (Campbell 2006:268). The new meanings developed in these cases are usually connected in some way to the original meaning.

There are a number of ways in which this semantic change can occur; for instance, the use of a word can be *narrowed* down: *acorn* used to mean ‘fruit’ in Early Modern English, but today it has narrowed down to a specific fruit, namely that of the oak tree (Denham and Lobeck 2013:309). Conversely, the use of a word can be *widened* and increase its range of meaning, as in the case of *salary*, which originally meant ‘wages for soldiers’ but has come to mean ‘wages’ in general. A word that has widened its range of meaning can thus be used in new situations but retain its primary meaning in the original context at the same time (Campbell 2006:254). As a word may have more than one meaning, Lichtenberk points out that “a certain component of the total meaning” of a word may provide the basis for an extension while other features are irrelevant (1991:478). There can therefore be semantic widening in more than one direction, picking up on various nuances of the original word.

Semantic change is sometimes referred to as *metaphorical extension* (Finegan 2004:56), and the meaning of a word can indeed change through its use in a metaphor and it is often mentioned as one of the major factors in semantic change (Campbell 2006:256). In a metaphor the meaning of a word is extended to create a semantic link between a new sense
and the original. For instance, the word used for the computer device mouse was derived from its resemblance to the rodent, thereby creating an extension by metaphor. This is a good example how advances in technology connect with an established meaning of a word, and it also proves that the semantic change could not have been predicted.

Changes in connotation can also influence the meaning of a word. A change towards a more negative connotation, pejoration, is more common than a positive change, amelioration (Denham and Lobeck 2013:309). The word awful, for instance, originally meant ‘awe-inspiring’, which has a positive connotation, but has through pejoration changed to mean ‘extremely bad’ or ‘unpleasant’. On the other hand, the word sophisticated, for example, originally meant ‘altered’ or ‘adulterated’, but now refers to someone or something ‘refined’, that is, it has acquired a more positive meaning.

The denotation of a word can in fact shift until it has become something completely different from the original meaning, as in the case of the Old English word moody. It has taken the leap from meaning ‘brave’ to meaning ‘indulging in moods of ill humour or depression’ (OED). However, even in cases where the present meaning of a word does not seem to be related to its original meaning, the shift has not been random (Denham and Lobeck 2013:309). There is always a connection to some part of the meaning in the original word, even though that meaning may have changed over the years.

### 3.3 Lord of the Rings Online

In the present study, the MMORPG Lord of the Rings Online (LotRO) is the environment chosen for identifying and analysing words and meanings developed through functional and semantic shift. LotRO is based on the world created in the popular fantasy books by J.R.R. Tolkien (Lord of the Rings Online 2012), and it offers a variety of content to players and caters to their individual player styles. As the game is centred on the lore of Tolkien, the content, language and mechanics of the game are heavily influenced by his legacy, and, for the most part, events and characters can be recognised from the Lord of the Rings trilogy in particular. Role-playing (RP) is very popular in this game, and many LotRO players are said to immerse themselves more than players of other known MMORPGs (Ssenir’s LOTRO library 2011). The built-in music system that allows for players to use various instruments also adds to the RP atmosphere, and there are concerts and plays offered on some servers. There is even a yearly concert event called “Weatherstock” on one of the servers. Other players can be more into player versus player (PvP) gaming or end-game content in player
versus environment (PvE), such as raids and instances (special areas in the game), which require more skill and time.

There are several servers to choose from when starting an adventure. Some of the servers are more dedicated to the RP community than others and this is then flagged with an ‘RP’ or ‘RE’ (Role-playing encouraged) in the name, as in Laurelin [EN RP]. Laurelin is the name of the server, EN is the abbreviation used to mark it as an English-speaking server, and RP means that the server is ‘role-play-supported’ (Turbine 2013). Other servers are more casual in their approach and not as focused on RP in the same way, but there is still a Code of Conduct (Turbine 2011) to observe. The Code of Conduct applies to all players regardless of server, but for the RP servers there are specific rules which place higher demands on a player’s behaviour towards other players.

The content of LotRO is rated to be suitable for ages 13 and up, but it is not considered to be a game played only by teenagers (Lord of the Rings Online 2012). Due to the popularity of the lore itself, it seems to attract people of all ages (cf. section 1 above). Therefore, the linguistic register of the players can be expected to vary as well. The default language used is English, even though there are servers dedicated specifically to French- and German-speaking players.

3.4 Communication in Lord of the Rings Online

Online communication, regardless of form, is different from traditional communication, and multiplayer games can influence and develop the use of English in their own way (Warschauer et al. 2010:490, 501). Other studies show that many users of the Internet state that the written language used there often resembles speech more than traditional writing (Baron 2002:4-5, Österljung 2011:6), and Crystal comments that it is neither “spoken writing” nor “written speech” but instead something entirely novel (2001:237). This phenomenon is highly visible in MMORPGs, yet it is not the case that ‘anything goes’, especially not in LotRO. This curbing effect on language innovation is largely due to the type of players that are attracted to the game and who try to maintain a somewhat more mature approach in the chat channels. LotRO thereby supports Hill’s claim that games with smaller communities have a friendlier attitude (2012), whereas games such as World of Warcraft have a reputation of appealing to a less mature community, perhaps due to the sheer size of the community. Nevertheless, MMORPGs are by definition playful, and the way the players communicate with each other is a reflection of this (Steinkuehler and Williams 2006:899). Functional shifts
and semantic changes in this environment can therefore be regarded as part of the game, as word play is one cause for language change.

A new player will have to go through a period of adjustment before fully comprehending the register of *LotRO*. It does seem to resemble many of the other MMORPGs in terms of language use and terminology, but due to the lack of linguistic studies made, any kind of comparison remains tentative. As in most online games there are several chat channels immediately accessible for all players in *LotRO*. Some of these channels are public for the whole server, as Table 1 below shows. The language in these channels, especially Globalff, can be quite immature at times. Globalff is an open channel that has many members and therefore reaches a much larger audience than most of the other channels, which is a reason for ‘forum trolls’ to use it. Nonetheless, this is where the particular register of the game can be studied, as many of the terms specific to the game are used in this channel, and the discussions also cover any kind of topic. Most of the corpus in this study is collected from this particular channel.

Table 1. Channels available to all players

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Channel name</th>
<th>Properties</th>
<th>Used for</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>Specific to a region in the game, such as the Shire or Bree-Land</td>
<td>Often used for RP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade</td>
<td>Region specific</td>
<td>Used when a player wants to sell something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OOC</td>
<td>Out Of Character</td>
<td>Channel for everything not game related</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advice</td>
<td>Region specific</td>
<td>Open for game related questions and help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LFF</td>
<td>Looking For Fellowship Region specific</td>
<td>Looking for people to group with in the region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Globalff</td>
<td>Global looking for fellowship Non-region specific</td>
<td>Looking for people to group with from the whole server. This channel needs to be actively chosen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some of the chat channels can only be accessed if the player is part of an *alliance* or other specific groups, as shown in Table 2. An alliance in the game is a number of players actively playing together while remaining in their respective *kinship*, which is a group of players intending to play together for a longer period of time.

Table 2. Specific channels
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Channel name</th>
<th>Properties</th>
<th>Used for</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fellowship</td>
<td>A temporary channel for a group of up to 6 players</td>
<td>Specific quests and instances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kinship</td>
<td>A channel for a long-term group of players</td>
<td>Social chat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raid</td>
<td>A temporary channel for a group of up to 12 players</td>
<td>Raids and PvP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alliance (any name)</td>
<td>User-created channel for selected players</td>
<td>Social chat and group planning (raid or fellowship)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Usually, an alliance can stay connected through user-created channels with restricted access. The language in these channels is often more personal and humorous, compared to that used in a raid or fellowship, for example, where communication is usually goal-oriented and more to the point, making casual banter less welcome.

As many of the discussions in *LotRo* take place in the Globallff channel, this channel can therefore be regarded as an essential source of the language register of *LotRO*. The communication in all the channels displays many of the characteristics of online communication as defined above, but the discussions also provide an indication of the playful nature of the community. These features suggest that functional shift and semantic change are natural occurrences in this environment.

4. Method and material

4.1 The *LotRO* corpus

The present study adopts a combined quantitative and qualitative approach. To collect material for analysis, a corpus has been created by logging different chat channels available in *LotRO* through an in-game application. The server used for the collection of data is called Laurelin, which is a designated RP server (cf. 3.3). Even though the publisher of the game, Turbine, does not reveal player demographics or even the population of each server, this server has, most probably, a majority of players residing in Europe. The reason for this assumption is that the server was previously placed and supported in the UK. It is therefore likely that many players are non-native speakers of English as most of the European players chose this server for proximity reasons (connectivity and stability), and consequently there may be plenty of varieties of English used.

To create the corpus, chat channels have been logged on most days between 25 November 2012 and 22 February 2013. The chatting itself is synchronous and there is no archive of older posts to be found, so anything said prior to login is inaccessible. The server is
most populated during evening hours and weekends, so an effort has been made to be present during those times.

All available channels were logged and 133 files of various sizes were created from these sessions. The files used in the corpus were named in the manner of ‘LN121207’. LN is the name of the server, in this case Laurelin, and 121207 is the date when the chat was logged, in this case December 7, 2012. There are also instances where several logs were made the same day and this is indicated with an additional number after the date. All chat entries start with the name of the channel in which they were made, and an entry would normally appear in the following format (example from file LN130205):

[globallff] Thoedon: ‘5/6 Skraid Thangulhad Need Healer’
[globallff] Laazomir: ‘WTS[13 Fused Profound Relics]’
[globallff] Phiolinord: ‘LG Dalies 2/x’

The original files were therefore edited, meaning that the names of the channels and generic messages such as ‘You have spotted a creature attempting to move stealthily about’, were removed prior to processing the data further, as those words should not be included in the word count. In total, after editing, there were 19 375 types (distinct words) and 348 298 tokens (individual occurrences of types) in the files. There is an example of these logs in Appendix I.

4.2 The individual words
The criterion for including an individual word in the analysis in this study is that it has a minimum of three occurrences with the same new meaning or function, found in different texts. The words have been organised and filtered through the application WordSmith Tools (Scott 2012), which is a software designed to help analyse how words behave in texts. It counts and sorts all words in selected texts either in alphabetical or frequency order, and it can also provide the setting for any word chosen. In the material considered in the present study, 12 469 tokens of 45 types were found to fulfil the requirements for inclusion in the analysis. By using the concordance option in WordSmith Tools, which allows the user to search for a word in its context and thereby determine its meaning, the quotes in section 5 were identified. No changes have been made in the quotes concerning wording or spelling. To verify the established meaning of the words, the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) has been used as a reference.
The results will be presented and analysed according to the type of word formation process, with examples from the chat logs so that any change in function or semantics will become apparent through the context. After each quote used, the name of the file used will be added in parentheses. A short list of definitions for some of the MMORPG terminology used in this study can be found in Appendix II.

4.1 Ethics
The official chat channels in LotRO are open to anyone, and players enter and leave the channel continually. The participation in the discussions on the channels is entirely voluntary and those who wish to contribute do so. Due to the nature of the chat channels, there was no realistic possibility to either inform or obtain consent from all the players prior to saving the chat logs for analysis. However, as the players are present only through their avatars, that is their characters in the game, and no personal information is disclosed, the principle of anonymity is upheld, in accordance with the guidelines laid down by Vetenskapsrådet (2013).

5. Presentation and discussion of results
5.1 Functional shift
Out of the 45 words of interest in this study, 16 were considered to have undergone a functional shift. Even though this number is small, the forms of functional shift found seem to agree with previous findings (Calvert and Baron n.d.:3, cf. section 3.1). Nine of the sixteen types (56%) shifted from noun to verb, six (38%) shifted from verb to noun, and the remaining one (6%) was a shift from an adjective to a noun. Shifting from a noun to a verb is thus confirmed to be a particularly productive word formation process that has lasted at least from the days of Shakespeare.

5.1.1 Adjective to noun
In the OED, the adjective shiny is defined as “full of light or brightness; luminous; having a bright or glistening surface”. When found in the game, it was used both in the original sense of the adjective as well as in the form of a noun which then means an item that is considered desirable for most players. Example 1 shows how it has been shifted into a noun, although in this example the word is misspelled.

(1) Chrysamere: '[Malledhrim Hunter's Boots]' Chrysamere: 'everybody get their shinny'
The connection between the adjective and the noun is apparent as the noun implies an item that is desirable, which an object that is *shiny* often is. In the game, a *shiny* is an item that is rare or has been crafted with the best result, a *critted* version of the item. In example 2 below we can see that *shiny*, in the form of a noun, has taken on the inflections of the plural noun – *shiny*-s.

(2) Miraigrema: '2[Guthfinn's Golden Bangle] send offers on global300 starting bid'
   Eventiine: 'lol'
   Tarinruk: 'uuuw :D shinys' (LN130125)

Normally, nouns ending in *-y* after a consonant would change to *-ies* in the plural; however, spelling is less important in this case, as is the misspelling of *shiny* in example 1. There will be no further remarks concerning spelling unless there is an obvious risk of misinterpretation.

### 5.1.2 Verb to noun

Shifting a verb to a noun in the game was fairly common. To *follow* someone means “to go or come after (a person or other object in motion)” in the *OED*. In *LotRO*, there is a game mechanics that allows player 1 to target player 2, and thereafter choose an option called “follow”, which means that wherever player 2 goes, player 1 follows without having to actively press a key to move. This has most likely caused the functional shift exemplified in sentences 3 and 4. The players do not say that they will *follow*, but rather that they will be on *follow*.

(3) Eawig: 'need warden to duo WP. I will be on follow' (LN1302133)

(4) Eriss: Afk, i put on follow (LN130210)

In most cases when this form was used, it was due to a player leaving the keyboard for some reason. This is apparent in example 4, where *afk* means ‘away from keyboard’. The meaning of the noun clearly reveals its origin, as it implies the action *to follow*. As this is an obvious
effect of the specific game mechanics, it would be safe to assume that other MMORPGs with this function would have a similar development of the verb follow.

In the game, there is a communication option of sending a private direct message to someone by using a command called /tell. Through this function a player tells something to another player, which is consistent with the OED’s definition of the word: “to make known by speech or writing; to communicate (information, facts, ideas, news, etc.); to state, announce, report, intimate”. As with follow, the very mechanics of this action has initiated the shift from a verb to a noun. In example 5, the player is requesting others to send messages if they have a required item to sell.

(5) Cazikee: 'Wtb [6 +20% Renown Gain (3 hours)]'
    Cazikee: 'Send a tell (LN1302212)

(6) Hannor: 'Full BG raid 9/12 need more - send tell with class (Must have access to mumble)' (LN1301102)

(7) Dagnos: 'IP t2 need ranged dps/cpt/healer' (LN1302133)
    Dagnos: 'Ip t2 full you guys can make one more, got 7 tells lol'

Example 6 resembles example 5 apart from the omission of the indefinite article. Most messages like these are invitations to a more private discussion, which is something normally done through these tells. The shift also entails the use of new inflections: in example 7, tell is displayed in the plural form.

5.1.3 Noun to verb

Shifting from a noun to a verb represented more than half of the functional shifts in LotRO, and this is consistent with previous findings, as mentioned earlier. For example, the noun ball is explained in the OED as “a solid or hollow spherical or egg-shaped object which is thrown, kicked, hit, or otherwise propelled in a game”. In LotRO, the use of ball was always found in connection with the preposition up as in ball up, and in the process this converted the noun into a verb. Examples 8 and 9 show the context of the word in this new function.

(8) Apri: And ball up all
    Rovanj: what means ball up? im sorry my inglich isnt verry best at all:P
In the game, the use of *ball up* was noted in encounters with specific mobs (enemies) and mostly in raids, which is a group of 12 players. The aim of the phrase in this context is to form a close group so that any distributed damage done by the enemy is minimised. If players are far apart from each other, they will take more damage which will then distribute to all in the group, and possibly causing a wipe (see Appendix II). Also, when viewing the group from above, it is similar in shape to a round ball. The concept of *ball* in the *OED* sense is familiar to most non-native English speakers, but example 8 shows that it is not always so clear what it signifies in the game. A *ball* in the original sense has little to do with the game itself, but as the group forms a circle, the connection is readily made.

The *OED* states that a *map* is “a drawing or other representation of the earth's surface or a part of it made on a flat surface, showing the distribution of physical or geographical features with each point in the representation corresponding to an actual geographical position according to a fixed scale or projection; a similar representation of the positions of stars in the sky, the surface of a planet, or the like. Also: a plan of the form or layout of something, as a route, a building, etc.” Players in *LotRO* can utilise *maps* to travel in-game, and by clicking on a *map* called “Return to Bree” the player will teleport to a specific location in the town of Bree. The *maps* can be acquired through purchase or by completing certain deeds. This is a fast way to travel around as there are many areas in the game and some are far apart from each other. This game mechanism has brought about a functional shift, and the noun is used as a verb and players say they ‘map somewhere’ instead of ‘travel somewhere’.

(10) Carrolai: 'Ettens need some freeps! :)'  
Ferul: 'it needs both freeps and creeps it's empty'  
Carrolai: 'you'd think so, but there's 5 / 8'ish creeps. doesnt take more to make action'  
Tindalas: 'ofc, in the moment the first freep is scouted, he gets reported and all creeps map to kill him, usual history' (LN130121)
Lamaendir: "I once jumped from outside the grand stair, survived and ended up in some places without any textures or anything and it bugges out so i had to map home" (LN1301102)

Galaduil: 'ok now...is there a way to get of the beacon fast? lol without comiting suicide lol'
Eorawyn: 'You could map off :P#
Galaduil: 'that could take longer with loading times lol'
Galaduil: 'jumping ftw lol' (LN130124)

In examples 10, 11 and 12, the verb form of map is used. To map somewhere is another way of saying that a player will travel fast to another area in the game. Map off in example 12 means that the map function can be used to get away from a beacon (which in this case is placed in a high tower). The economy of using the word map instead of travel can have facilitated the spread of the word, but even in this case the use of maps due to the game mechanics might have enabled the shift. There is also a verb form in the OED that is defined as “to describe, outline, chart, or represent as if on a map”, although it has most likely shifted from another sense of the noun map. The verb map in the game is derived from the function that initiates a travel.

A vendor is “someone who disposes of a thing by sale; a seller”, according to the OED. As in most MMORPGs, there is an in-game economy in LotRO, and there are many non-player-characters (NPCs) who sell and purchase goods. They are often referred to as vendors, although their official title can be ‘supplier’ or ‘provisioner’. In the game, the noun is also used as a verb, as examples 13-15 demonstrate, very much corresponding to how the noun market evolved into the verb (to) market.

Strugo: 'WTS [Cloth Gloves] 700G STARTER BID'
Carnonius: 'it's more 999G worth'
Adhain: 'price check 1250 [Seasoned Beef with Cauliflower]'
Strugo: 'Yumm!'
Brynstan: 'Whatever you can vendor 'em for - Bound'
Gilrandas: 'Is it real beef or is there horse meat ion it?'
Leofwyne: 'yup, pretty worthless, even if they werent bound' (LN130210)
(14) Maelliel: 'WTS [Riddermark Scroll of Empowerment] 35g [Small Reputation Acceleration Tome] 4g [Relic Removal Scroll] 35g'  
Bimbromir: 'gone fast :)'  
Magita: 'someone vendored it already o.o' (LN130102)

(15) Sanchi: 'where can I trade this at? [Bogbull's Bones]'  
Noiran: 'Vendor?'  
Ikuturso: 'I think nowhere anymore :( They were used on single-use recipes before shards were introduced'  
Sanchi: 'Ahh alright, thanks'  
Ikuturso: 'yah, vendor them for some coin' (LN121128)

To *vendor* something in the game means simply to sell something. In example 14, the item is in the past tense form of the verb, indicating that it automatically assumes the correct inflections. There is no apparent economy in saying *vendor* instead of *sell*, so the reason for using it might be one of word play, although it could also be seen as a lazy way of using the term.

The *OED* has the following explanation for the term *ninja*: “a person trained in the feudal Japanese art of ninjutsu or a modern version of it. In extended use: a person or thing considered to behave or look like a ninja”. The sense of a *ninja* operating covertly has been adapted into *LotRO* and other MMORPGs, and if a group of players invites another player without preliminary contact, they *ninja* the player.

(16) Mjalin: 'Ninja Fim :)'  
Flaeri: might be easier to put me in the tank group?  
Fimbultyr: great, was just about to ask if anyone was in need of a big axe with a dwarf attached to it...  
Mjalin: we're always in the need of a big axe :) (LN1301122)

(17) Gwyldrion: 'We could do a champ run'  
Gwyldrion: 'Only boss might prove challenging'  
Theoda: 'it's not hard in t1, you can solo it so 2x champs should be ezmod :p'  
Gwyldrion: 'I already got ninjaed :'(
In examples 16 and 17, that is precisely what has happened. The imperative verb form of *ninja* in example 16 instructs the leader of the group to select a player for a surprise invitation. In example 17, it is a player informing someone else of being *ninjaed* into a group. The use of the noun *ninja* in MMORPGs is quite common, but if the verb form is used outside *LotRO* is more difficult to ascertain.

### 5.2 Semantic change

Semantic change was found in connection with 31 terms used in the game, and all of them can be said to have undergone a widening process. Two of these terms also appear in the count for functional shift, but in the present section, they are not considered as having changed syntactic category, only meaning. There were four terms (13%), out of the total 31, which changed through metaphorical extension. Two terms (6%) are used in a way representing pejoration and one term (3%) meets the criteria for amelioration. The other 24 (77%) that were analysed correspond to a widening process without any discernible changes to connotation.

#### 5.2.1 Amelioration

To be a *lifer* is, in the *OED*, “a person serving a sentence of imprisonment or (formerly) transportation for life”. Derived from the term ‘lifetime sentence’, this has a negative connotation as it obviously describes an undesirable fate that is, moreover, related to crime. In *LotRO*, however, there has been the opportunity to purchase a lifetime account access to the game. Players who have done this are commonly referred to as *lifers*, and, as the option to purchase such an account is no longer effective, it has become a very positive term for this reason. These *lifers* need not pay any subscription fees and they have access to all areas in the game.

(18) Belrunor: ‘Originally Posted by Gareth420 I am excited about the extra day myself. Being a lifer I am assuming either #1 when they shut the game down they will let me play an additional day or #2 when I die I will be allowed to return to earth for 24 hrs and play lotro. Either way Im happy. You can't imagine the work we had to do to pull that off!’ (LN1302182)
As there are benefits with being a *lifer*, it is viewed as an enviable status. In the sense that is being used in the game, the word has acquired a positive meaning. In example 18, however, the player is being ironic about a benefit of an extra day of subscription (a compensation) that a *lifer*, for natural reasons, cannot use.

5.2.2 Pejoration

When using the verb *farm* we naturally think of the *OED* meaning: “to cultivate, till”. However, in *LotRO*, and many other MMORPGs, this term is used in a more negative sense. To *farm* is the action when someone systematically empties a zone from enemies, for the benefit of either loot or quest progression, as in example 19 below. This action renders the particular area useless for anyone else whilst the *farming* is underway. Even though *farming* is frowned upon by the majority of players, there are many who have no qualms about doing it. Some players utilise this tactic in high-level groups, making it even harder for others to access enemies or bosses. Bosses are the enemies that provide the greatest challenges, and also the greatest rewards (see Appendix II).

(19) Serabrand: '[Venomous Dread Turtle Beak] someone pls remind me...how many of these do one need for the class quest?'
Belguimir: '5 or 10'
Belguimir: 'not sure'
Rothard: 'wasn't it 15-20 iirc?'
Belguimir: 'they used ot be harder to get so now maybe 20'
Rothard: 'on lvl they are a pain to get :D'
Rothard: 'better buy them with marks'
Serabrand: 'why bother, im here now and can farm the turtles.' (LN130221)

(20) Thraric: 'sword halls 85 t1 ultra fast farm 2/3 need captain' (LN1302022)

Example 20 shows that *farming* is done in instances as well. This is a way to quickly ‘harvest’ money and other rewards that might drop from enemies. When the rewards are especially desirable, the *farming* is escalated. It is viewed by some as an action bordering on exploitation, but it is not against any of the rules. Another type of *farming* can be considered
to be a more positive form, such as when a player is scouring an area for crafting materials. In general, however, when *farming* is discussed, it is in the negative form.

Apart from being subject to a functional shift, the original meaning of the term *ninja* has also changed semantically in a negative sense. If someone is called a *ninja* in the game, it is a very disparaging term, and players do not want a reputation of being a *ninja*. To be a *ninja* means that the player is someone who steals loot from others and then usually maps off. In Globallff, players on the Laurelin server are prone to warn other players if they have encountered a *ninja*. Examples 21 and 22 are reflecting this semantic change.

(21) Ikuturso: 'I always appreciate warnings of ninjas ;)' (LN1302011)

(22) Edelnir: 'Evawyn kiker at final boss of the instance, care with him'
    Edelnir: 'master looter ninja'
    Evawyn: 'i kicked all of you to reset the last boss, since you don't understand'
    Evawyn: 'and i don't care about the loot mate'
    Edelnir: 'nvm, i ignore you' (LN121203)

In example 22, Edelnir is in fact warning others about Evawyn being a *ninja*. The usual modus operandi of a *ninja* in MMORPGs is to reach the end of a raid only to dismiss the others from the group before the chests containing the rewards are opened. In that way, everything goes to the *ninja*. The association of a *ninja* with a person involved in some form of a covert action is not far-fetched. The change in connotation to the negative is also consistent with the semantic change process. It can perhaps also be seen as a metaphorical extension of the original meaning through the notion of someone who is moving stealthily, or someone with a hidden agenda.

5.2.3 Metaphorical extension

There were a few terms that agreed with the definition of a semantic change through metaphorical extension. A *tank* brings to mind the description from the *OED*: “an armoured military vehicle moving on a tracked carriage and mounted with a gun, designed for use in rough terrain”. It is built to withstand a lot of damage and to be up front, closest to the enemy and protecting the foot soldiers. A *tank* in *LotRO* (as well as in many other MMORPGs) has
the task to be up front with the enemies and bosses in fights. The *tank* is a melee defender by MMORPG terminology, and the *tank* keeps the rest of the group as safe as possible.

(23) Roxyy: 'GS.. questmode.. 3/6 need more dps and a tank' (LN121226)

(24) Teppy: 'oh shoot, seems noone needs a tank for once' (LN1212053)

(25) Galdirion: one tank get first group
    Galdirion: other take other group when it comes (LN1301012)

This kind of character in the game normally has heavy armour and can charge through a group of enemies without too many injuries. The similarities between the vehicle *tank* and the *tank* in the game are many, and their roles are also alike in comparison. Very few instances or raids work without a *tank* or two and they are in high demand, as examples 23 and 24 show. In example 25, the use of two *tanks* is explained; they are responsible for dealing with one group of enemies each.

To *buff* something means in the *OED* “to polish with a buff (a piece of soft material)”. In this sense it implies making something look its best, thereby enhancing it. In many MMORPGs this term is used to describe an action that improves the other players in a group in one way or the other. It can be *buff* to protect players from disease or poison, or to *buff* them so that they are provided with additional morale or power.

(26) Jola: buff me up (LN1301064)

(27) Felathurin: 'etten raid need more mns. capt, lm'
    Felathurin: 'it's open'
    Bormaethor: 'yes ffs, I cannot buff 18 ppl'
    Lisko: 'Well WHY NOT? :P' (LN1302173)

(28) Aeganadan: 'as a scholar you can make things that will buff your character'
    Hamildoc: 'hmm that sounds nice to' (LN1302112)

In example 26, the player is asking to be *buffed*, and in example 27, a player wants assistance in *buffing* the group. There are also items, such as scrolls and tokens, which can be used for
this purpose, as described in example 28. Before starting a raid, or a tough fight, players will want to be *buffed* to have as much protection and force as possible, i.e. to look and be their best. The connection between the definition in the *OED* and the use in MMORPGs is the sense of making something appear its best.

### 5.2.4 Widening

The process of widening was found in 77% of the semantic changes in the analysis. In *LotRO* there is a class that can summon different *pets*, such as bears, ravens or eagles, to assist in fights. The *OED* defines a pet as “an animal (typically one which is domestic or tame) kept for pleasure or companionship”. The *pet* in the game can be regarded as a companion of sorts and many have their *pets* summoned wherever they go, even though they are mainly intended for fighting. Example 29 shows a player admiring a *pet* belonging to another player. There is also an option to purchase *pets* that are pure companions, such as cats, turtles or dogs. These cannot be used in battle but have become a cosmetic feature (see Cosmetic in Appendix II).

(29) Alainir: 'ohh Lori no fair!'
     Alainir: 'your pet lynx so yummy :D' (LN1301073)

(30) Morral: 'What is the best skirmish farming class?'
     Runey: 'champ'
     Isenhast: 'the one you enjoy playing the most'
     Aemor: 'champ with warrior pet'
     Aemor: 'mass aoe everything dies' (LN1301064)

In an update to the game, all players were given the option to summon a warrior or a healer character to their side, and this summoned character was quickly labelled as a *pet*, too. It is not difficult to see the reasoning behind this semantic widening, and the term is now used as an established term in the game for the humanoid companions as well.

A *mob* is defined in the *OED* as “a disorderly or riotous crowd, a rabble. *Mil. slang*. A body of troops; a battalion, regiment, or other military unit. A gang of criminals, esp. thieves”. *Mobs* as such are common in most MMORPGs, and they represent anything that can or will attack you. A *mob* can for example be any warg, orch or giant, and they all belong to the dark side in the game, much like the *mob* as described in the *OED*.
(31) Garafir: 'do book pages drop just anywhere these days?'
    Samanthaj: 'dont know used to be humanoid mobs in west angmar and MM'
    (LN1302201)

(32) Bainwen: 'Dps should be nerfed so that it would take half-hour to kill a
    normal mob. :)' (LN130202)

It is from a mob, however, that a player gets loot, money and quest items and they are an
essential part of the game. They can appear in groups or alone and they will attack a player
that comes too close. The original term has widened into encompassing all entities that will do
a player harm.

To have a lock in LotRO can mean either that a player cannot play a certain
instance more than once a week (the player has a timed lock so that the instance cannot be
farmed or exploited), or that the player needs to have specific instances locked to be able to
proceed further. The OED defines a lock as “an appliance for fastening a door, lid, etc.,
consisting of a bolt (or system of bolts) with mechanism by which it can be propelled and
withdrawn by means of a key or similar instrument”. The player in example 33 wonders if
others can join him or if they have locks preventing them. In example 34, the player has
acquired the locks needed for progression in a raid with multiple levels, much like a lock
gated passage, i.e. if one stage is not completed and locked, the group cannot proceed to the
next stage.

(33) Degored: 'draigoch or everybody have locks?' (LN121128)

(34) Swifteye: '1/12 Rift Need all. I have locks for the balrog himself froma
    failed run yesterday' (LN1302193)

(35) Glor: 'um how to check how long i have raid locks for?
    Darimir: './raid locks'
    Glor: 'thx' (LN1302022)

The widening of the term is quite logical as the lock in LotRO locks players out from some of
the instances during a limited amount of time. The locks in the game have a ‘reset day’ when
all the locks are opened again and have to be obtained anew, which is what the player in example 35 is wondering about.

5.3 Complete results

Table 3 and 4 below displays all the types identified in the analysis of the corpus as being of interest for this study. These have all been found in three instances or more in the corpus.

Table 3. Instances of functional shift

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Functional shift</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adds</td>
<td>Verb to noun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggro</td>
<td>Noun to verb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ball</td>
<td>Noun to verb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooldown</td>
<td>Verb to noun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duo</td>
<td>Noun to verb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow</td>
<td>Verb to noun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heal</td>
<td>Verb to noun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kite</td>
<td>Noun to verb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map</td>
<td>Noun to verb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ninja</td>
<td>Noun to verb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Run</td>
<td>Verb to noun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shiny</td>
<td>Adjective to noun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tank</td>
<td>Noun to verb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tell</td>
<td>Verb to noun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trait</td>
<td>Noun to verb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vendor</td>
<td>Noun to verb</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some of the shifts and changes in table 3 and 4 might be due to the game mechanics introduced by the developers of the game, but it is only through actual use of the terms that a language change can occur.

Table 4. Instances of semantic change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Semantic change</th>
<th>Process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boss</td>
<td>Widening</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buff</td>
<td>Widening</td>
<td>Metaphor</td>
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<td>--------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cappy</td>
<td>Widening</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chimp</td>
<td>Widening</td>
<td>Pejoration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chump</td>
<td>Widening</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class</td>
<td>Widening</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creep</td>
<td>Widening</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Deed</td>
<td>Widening</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drop</td>
<td>Widening</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Farm</td>
<td>Widening</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Instance</td>
<td>Widening</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Kinship</td>
<td>Widening</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Leech</td>
<td>Widening</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Legacy</td>
<td>Widening</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifer</td>
<td>Widening</td>
<td>Amelioration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lock</td>
<td>Widening</td>
<td>Metaphor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Main</td>
<td>Widening</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mob</td>
<td>Widening</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ninja</td>
<td>Widening</td>
<td>Pejoration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nodes</td>
<td>Widening</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Pet</td>
<td>Widening</td>
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<tr>
<td>Raid</td>
<td>Widening</td>
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<tr>
<td>Random</td>
<td>Widening</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relic</td>
<td>Widening</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roll</td>
<td>Widening</td>
<td>Metaphor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Session</td>
<td>Widening</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skirmish</td>
<td>Widening</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spawn</td>
<td>Widening</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stance</td>
<td>Widening</td>
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<tr>
<td>Solo</td>
<td>Widening</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tank</td>
<td>Widening</td>
<td>Metaphor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most of these new words will remain in the domain of MMORPGs, but some might find their way outside of the virtual realm. As seen in example 8 in section 5.1.3, for instance, some
players are not very fluent in English, and due to this, they pick up and learn from the linguistic register available in the game. The playfulness of the language in the game could also be a reason for a possible spread outside LotRO. It has been known to happen that a player of an MMORPG has aggroed a significant other who is not a player in an MMORPG.

6. Conclusion
To use already established words in new contexts is a smart way of creating new words and new meanings. It is also quite efficient as many people already know the words with their original meanings and typical contexts, and the leap to new meanings in the new environments is therefore short. Some people might be worried that the English language is being bastardised through this process of language change or that standards are being ruined, while others argue that English is being revitalised by the contributions and innovations from native and non-native English speakers around the world (Warschauer et al 2010:490). That so many people are able to participate, with minimal effort, in the development of English, is both a challenge and an opportunity. In the days of Shakespeare, some people’s concern about language change was very much the same as today. Change is, however, a natural course for any language, and when it comes to the English language, there is a world-wide involvement in this change.

The findings in this study are in agreement with other findings regarding linguistic forms of change. It would have been interesting to see statistics on which one of the word formation processes investigated here, functional shift or semantic change, was most common in that kind of context, but to date, no such statistics have been provided, as far as I could ascertain. The results in this study, however, indicate that semantic change is the most common process, and that widening is the consequence of most such cases.

The fact that players of MMORPGs are communicative and, to all appearances, creative in their interaction provides excellent conditions for new uses of established words. There are plenty of new situations in LotRO that call for the use of new terms, and in MMORPGs there are no direct guidelines or restrictions on how to use English. Communication flows freely and if enough players like the use of a new expression, it will quickly be picked up and used by more of them. Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games are a relatively new phenomenon, though they have been around since the late 1990s, and they may now be beginning to make an impact on the development of the English language.
References

Primary sources

Appendix I: Examples of chat logs from *LotRO* during Nov 25 2012 – Feb 22 2013 from the Laurelin server.

Appendix II: Definitions of gaming terms used in essay

Secondary sources


http://www.jstor.org/stable/415035


http://www.lotro.com/gameinfo/what-is-lotro


https://gupea.ub.gu.se/bitstream/2077/23790/1/gupea_2077_23790_1.pdf


http://shakespeare.mit.edu/midsummer/midsummer.3.2.html


Appendix I: Example of a chat log from the Laurelin server

LN121205
Baramdoc: 'Thank's for correcting my spelling Fealinwe... but I'm afraid I may have bad news for you :('
Fealinwe: 'yeah I know :('
Fealinwe: 'but let's hear it anyway'
Serabrand: 'If you believe what the evolusionists say we are all related to a small tribe in Africa, who are related themselves...to monkeys. However you dont have to believe everything the evolusionists say.'
Brennil: 'lmao thats funny Sera'
Brennil: 'I suggest reading a bit more about evolution'
Fealinwe: 'it matters not what you believe anyway, if it's true then it's true :)'
Kalracar: 'jepp, er ikke de fra 40?'
Fealinwe: 'whether you believe it or not'
Kalracar: 'nt'
Threrandir: 'who are evoluSionists? some magicians? illusionists?'
Maedlin: 'Yes you do need to believe that because it is patently true...'
Fealinwe: 'but in the end not many would care I guess. If it's true then it's so far back in history that no one cares anymore'
Wintell: 'I think that we're like earths version of Herpies, but earth is too lazy to go to the doctors.'
Fealinwe: 'I'm one of the elves who awoke at the lake of Cuivienen. However I tend to believe we arrived there from outer space'
Fealinwe: 'just beamed down and memory erased :P'
Fyhob: 'wts [Polished Bracelet of the Rabbit][Decorative Hauberk][Guardian's Hammer of the Second Age][2 Legendary Fragments][6 Universal Healing Potions][+20% Monster and Quest XP (3 hours)][Elegant Earring of the Fox][7 Infused Garnets]pstd with ofers'
Fealinwe: 'Earendil has a spaceship too, and only the elves know the 'straight road'... it's proven fact: there's hyperspace!'
Serabrand: 'No, we are hust a species who evolved from something else, we are not any form of biological desiese.'
Seky: 'necromancers gate raid 85, run for the symbol: tank, healer and 2 dps needed'
Serabrand: 'just*'
Fealinwe: 'yet we act like one Sera :)' Fealinwe: 'like parasites, destroying the resources then move on to the next limb of earth until our host is dead :)' Seky: 'necromancers gate raid 85, run for the symbol: tank, healer and 2 dps needed'
Fealinwe: 'Curiosity will soon find a plaque on Mars saying: 'here once lived humanity, we depleted Mars' resources, goodbye Mars, we're heading to earth now''
Serabrand: 'Not all of us think like that, some of us would prefer to better look after the world in which we live.'
Pinli: 'i believe fealin :p'
Fealinwe: 'of course, not all tumors are hostile :)' Seky: 'necromancers gate raid 85, run for the symbol: tank, healer and 1 dps needed'
Pinli: 'imagine earth without humans, paradise :D'
Pinedor: '
Nimrhaw: 'Fealinwe, since you are human too, ie. a parasite, why not a suicide, right now?'
Arkkantos: 'i prefer earth without trolls'
### Appendix II: Definitions of gaming terms used in essay

| **Boss** | An enemy-based challenge (and a computer-controlled opponent in such a challenge). A fight with a boss character is commonly referred to as a boss battle or boss fight. Boss battles are generally seen at the climax of a particular section of the game, usually at the end of a stage or level, or guarding a specific objective, and the boss enemy is generally far stronger than the opponents the player has faced up to that point. The boss enemy is often larger in size than other enemies and the player character. Bosses are usually significantly superior to regular enemies, and are usually found at the end of a level or area. |
| **Class** | In role-playing games, a common method of arbitrating the capabilities of different game characters is to assign each one to a character class. A character class aggregates several abilities and aptitudes, and may also sometimes detail aspects of background and social standing or impose behaviour restrictions. RPG systems that employ character classes often subdivide them into levels of accomplishment, to be attained by players during the course of the game. A class represents a particular set of in-game abilities which determine the way a player interacts with the world, primarily during combat. The most common class types consist of melee (close-range) offense, melee defender (tank), ranged offense, crowd control, healing and general support. Classes in LotRO are: burglar, captain, champion, guardian, hunter, lore-master, minstrel, rune-keeper and warden. |
| **Cosmetics** | The ability to define additional cosmetic appearances, called Outfits, for a character. These Outfits override the visual appearance of the base Equipment. These additional inventories are only cosmetic, and Equipment will continue to be the only items affecting character stats. Cosmetic, non-combat pets do not attack or provide any other benefits, they simply follow the Lore-master around, sometimes impressing onlookers. |
| **Distributed damage** | Distributed damage means that if you are alone and take this hit, you will die. However, when it is distributed, the damage encounters diminishing returns and will be reduced further and further for each additional target hit by the swipe with a distributed damage attack/AoE which does large |
| **Game mechanics** | Game mechanics are constructs of rules intended to produce a game or gameplay. All games use mechanics; however, theories and styles differ as to their ultimate importance to the game. The interaction of various game mechanics in a game determines the complexity and level of player interaction in the game, and in conjunction with the game's environment and resources determine game balance. Some forms of game mechanics have been used in games for centuries, while others are relatively new, having been invented within the past decade. |
| **Instance** | In massively multiplayer online games, an instance is a special area, typically a dungeon, which generates a new copy of the location for each group, or for certain number of players, that enters the area. Instancing, the general term for the use of this technique, addresses several problems encountered by players in the shared spaces of virtual worlds. |
| **Wipe** | Colloquial term for the demise of the entire party of player characters in a single encounter during the course of a role-playing game adventure. |