

## **Communication in Online Games, Focusing on Genshin Impact**

### 1. Introduction

Online gaming has been steadily rising in popularity, especially with the recent influx of the Corona-19 Virus that has plagued the world. With everyone stuck at home, online games have been one of the best, if not the best thing keeping the world and myself afloat. Being able to socialise and talk to friends and family online has prevented the world from isolating itself and shutting down. With all the social distancing needed, people turn to online gaming and online methods of communication to get their daily fix of human interaction. By combining online communication and gaming, this creates an even more wholesome experience for the users. Genshin Impact would be one such example.

One of the biggest games in 2020 (Hersko & Hersko, 2020), Genshin Impact is an immersive action-based role-playing game. ("Genshin Impact," 2020) The free to play game was first released on the 28th of September 2020 on multiple platforms like Microsoft Windows, PlayStation, Android and iOS. Genshin Impact takes place in a fantasy world that also capitalises on the Gacha Game System where it induces players to spend in-game currency to receive a random virtual item. Not only does the game have an interesting storyline and killer graphics, but it is also free to play and even features a multiplayer option of up to 4 players. In this discussion, we will be focusing on the multiplayer aspects in terms of how communication works in Genshin Impact. Genshin Impact is a game made in China by the company miHoYo. Though it is a game made in China, the game's audio can be played in 4 different languages: English, Mandarin, Japanese and Korean and written text can be in most languages, making this game readily available for all.

### 2. Literature Review

A paper was done by Nhamo, Dube and Chikodzi on the Implications of COVID-19 on gaming, leisure and the entertainment industry. In the paper, they explained the rise in demand for online games, especially multiplayer online games that feature in-game forms of communication. They mentioned that due to the impact that COVID-19 has caused, video games, especially online multiplayer games have seen an increase in demand. As mentioned, "several people across the world spend hours on entertainment which includes television, gaming, amusement parks, musical shows, casinos and performing arts." (Nhamo, Dube and Chikodzi, 2020) It is through this quote that we can see that gaming has become a chosen entertainment source that people turn to. Although the paper mainly focuses on the implications of COVID-19 on all the arts, the section on gaming is relevant as it features using online gaming as a crutch to curb the lack of social interaction. This paper also touches on how the entertainment sector had drastically changed since the COVID-19.

### 3. Methods of communication in Genshin Impact

In Genshin Impact, there is currently one method of multiplayer communication which is in the form of the chatbox. This was only recently added as a new feature back in their 1.2 updates in December. This update was made due to requests from the game players to co-op<sup>1</sup> with one another better. Before the update, players had to use 3rd party forms of communication like Zoom, Skype and Discord. This new update features chat functions with not just friends but other players as well. The chat function is available to all players once they reach Adventure Rank (AR) 15<sup>2</sup> and people can chat using two methods: regular chat or their in-game Genshin stickers. The regular chat is like our typical social media chats like WhatsApp, LINE and Telegram. They serve as a way for others to talk to each other and converse in the game without having to leave the game to enter a third-party online communication platform. In Genshin Impact, the regular chat has a filter like most games whereby certain offensive or curse words get censored once used. The regular chat feature also has some suggest phrases and keywords to use.



Figure 1: Shows the keywords

Though this regular communication mode is useful, there are some drawbacks to it whereby it may not be convenient to type messages while playing the game, especially when there is a tough boss to defeat, thus obstructing gameplay. Additionally, language barriers may obstruct and prevent players from different countries and languages from playing together.

Hence, a more commonly used chat function is their Genshin stickers which are readily available for all players. These Genshin stickers are similar to telegram stickers in the sense that they represent or convey a certain meaning. Telegram stickers tend to convey single emoji meanings which can then be interpreted by the recipient whereas Genshin stickers have a stricter meaning as they each convey a specific message like "Well done" or "Move outta the way" are expressions commonly used when playing the game. These stickers are extremely useful when playing with people in different languages and countries as we need

<sup>1</sup> Co-op: Play the game in multiplayer mode with friends.

<sup>2</sup> Adventure rank: Level of experience in the game.

not understand and be able to read their language as one simply needs to understand what that specific sticker emoticon means.

Like, take the emoticon sticker “well done” as an example, if I were to send it to someone who is playing Genshin in a different language, they will undoubtedly be able to understand the meaning and significance of the sticker as the game was played well or the quest was done well. This would mean that players would be able to converse and play with others from other countries who may speak different languages. Moreover, the gameplay will not be disturbed as often as chat boxes as players simply need to send a sticker as a reply or question without having to type anything out. This creates even more seamless gameplay. Just with the stickers, we can communicate without having to understand a different language.



Figure 2.1: Shows the emoticons able to be used as well as their definitions

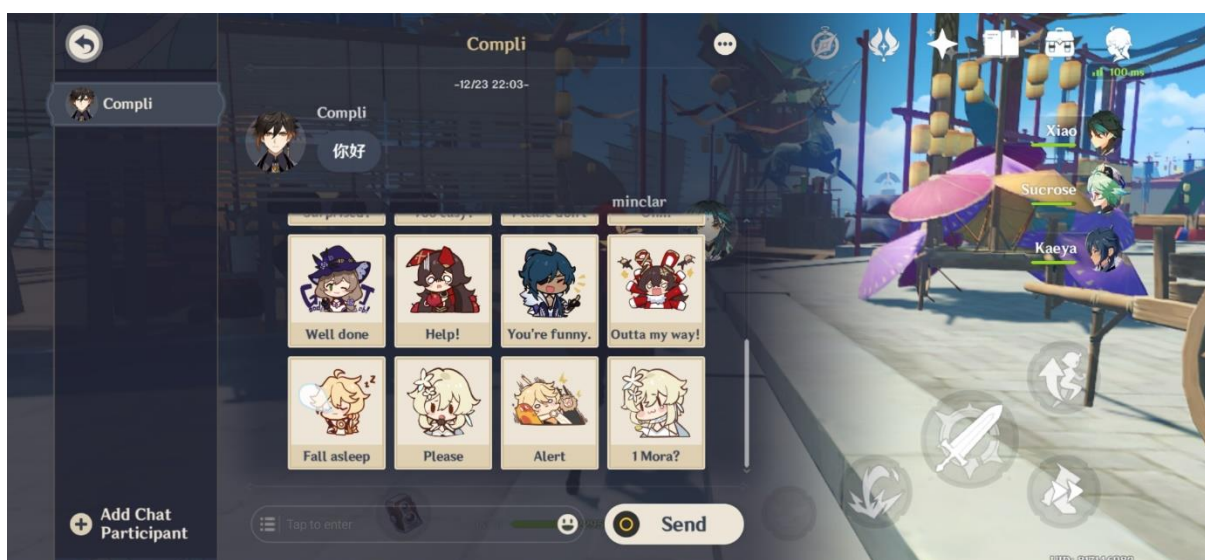


Figure 2.2: Shows the emoticons able to be used as well as their definitions



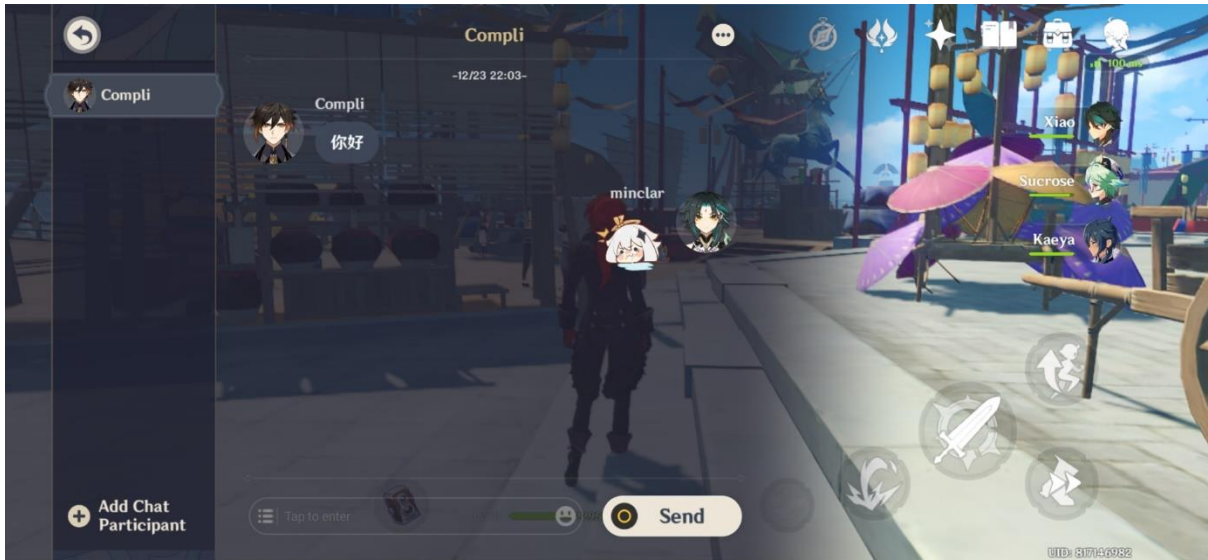


Figure 3: Shows both chat function and emoticons

Figure 3 also shows that we can send messages in any language no matter what the recipients' language setting is on. The example shown has the recipient's game in English while the sender is playing in Chinese.



Figure 4: Shows how the chats appear at the side on the screen

In figure 4, it shows that Genshin Impact also allows one to view the messages that pop out at the side so that people do not have to enter and exit the chats just to see the messages. This is a smart decision as players can see the notifications from the corner of their eye on the screen and they can instantly react upon seeing the messages. Stickers can also be sent this way.



Figure 5: Able to have different chats at once

In figure 5, it shows that Genshin Impact allows players to have different chats at one time including a special chat that only appears when a team or party is formed, and it only lasts up until the team disbands. This allows players to have different conversations with the players just like having a WhatsApp or Telegram group chat.

#### 4. How can communication in Genshin Impact be improved upon?

Firstly, Genshin Impact does not feature a voice chat at the moment. This idea has been brought up before but it has not been implemented yet. A voice chat would be a great feature to have for multiple different reasons. The first is that slower readers would not feel burdened by the chance of slowing their teammates down or failing to complete a task due to their inability to read as quickly as others. This can lead to discrimination towards those with reading impairments and disabilities, thus creating a less comfortable and open environment for players to play the game in. Secondly, though emoticons have their benefits and uses, they are often still left open to interpretation. Take for example tones, saying "well done" could be deemed as sarcastic and belittling to another player. However, with the addition of voice chat, one would be able to differentiate the tones and understand where the player is coming from and what they are most likely trying to imply. Games such as Mobile Legends and League of Legends that feature both the voice chat function and the regular chat functions. This allows for more conducive gaming and better teamwork and flow.

Another way that communication in Genshin can be improved is by allowing emoticons to be voiced. Although this may limit the interpretations and uses of the emoticons, it allows the creators to have the emoticons be used for their original intention. This would help address the problem brought up in part (3) as the emoticons would not get misinterpreted as often as before. An example would be in Mobile Legends whereby certain phrases are voiced out when selected and this helps those with reading impairments or disabilities get the message quickly and also allow the user to receive the message without needing look at the chatbox while playing the game midway, limiting and reducing distractions.

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## 5. Voice Chats in Gaming

Based on a paper done by Williams, Caplan and Li, they studied the impact of voice, focusing on the impact of having voice messages or chats in multiplayer gaming. Their main focus of the study was done on whether voice affects people, the population and society. In this study, they compared the difference in attitudes between text and voice players as well as text only players, looking at the unexpected negative effects on the text-only players. In their introduction, they mentioned how voice has and will always be an important tool to society in our everyday lives. The method they used to test is based on the participants' self answered questionnaire and took their feedback and experience based on how much they enjoyed and how much time they spent on the games. At the end of the experiment, Williams, Caplan and Li stated that "Voice has several functions in human communication beyond the transmission of content." (Williams et al., 2007), even from the beginning, they believe that voice is of great significance and importance in human interaction and with voice, there are more positive benefits than without it. In their discussion, they mention online gaming focusing on the Mass Multiplayer Online (MMO) whereby voice chat is significant is having more cohesive gameplay as with voice chat, additionally, they concluded that "interaction effects suggest significantly higher levels of relationship strength and trust between voice-based guildmates when compared to the text condition over time" which can be important when playing the game long term or to get the best experience out of the game. They also mention that there was higher happiness among those with voice chat compared to those without it. Voice chat helps to improve the overall gaming experience.

## 6. Conclusion

Overall, Genshin has been a game that is rapidly on the rise, with its fantastic high-quality graphics and compelling gameplay, it is also free to play and have good communication methods that allow the multiplayer mode to run more smoothly than in the past. With the rapidly expanding technology in today's world, communication, especially online communication has become more common and much more advanced. This is even so in gaming. In a critical time (COVID-19) where human and social interaction is limited, online gaming has evolved a great deal and communication in online gaming is crucial and paramount to a game's success.

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