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ENG 101

### **My Discourse Community**

Everyone belongs to some kind of community. Whether it be an AP class in high school, a sports club or team, or an online group, everybody belongs to one. Many of these communities, including my Discord Server “the Bopsquad”, are called “Discourse Communities.”

#### **Discourse Communities**

Before I explain how my Discord video gaming server, “The Bopsquad”, is a Discourse Community, I need to define what a Discourse Community is. A Discourse Community’s goal is something shared by each member of the community. Every community has a common set of goals. According to John Swales, “The goals are public, because spies may join speech and discourse communities for hidden purposes of subversion, while more ordinary people may join organizations with private hopes of commercial or romantic advancement.”(Swales, 11)

Typically, this goal or set of goals coincides with the information that the community is sharing. One of the main reasons any Discourse Community is made is to share specific types of information that concerns the community. This information is typically shared through the genres and mechanisms of intercommunication that help spread the information and educate the members of the community. Some communities use the intercommunication of a “meeting” while using the “genre” of a group phone call, while others use the intercommunication of a

“newspaper” through the genre of a “website”. While members of these communities talk and spread information, “Lexis” and specific phrases are often used. While these terms mean nothing on their own, John Swales said that “Most commonly, however, the inbuilt dynamic towards an increasingly shared and specialized terminology is realized through the development of community-specific abbreviations and acronyms”, aka Lexis, mean something different to the members of the community than they do to people outside of the community.(Swales, 16) Often in these communities, the people sharing most of the information are the “experts” of the community, while the people who are new or are still learning the ins and outs of the community are the “novices”. Swales said, “...survival of the community depends on a reasonable ratio between novices and experts”, meaning that in a Discourse Community, you can’t have one group without the other.(Swales, 17) According to John Swales, the six traits: the main goal, the information shared, the intercommunication and genres, the lexis, and the experts to novice ratios are “necessary and sufficient for identifying a group of individuals as a discourse community.” (Swales, 10)

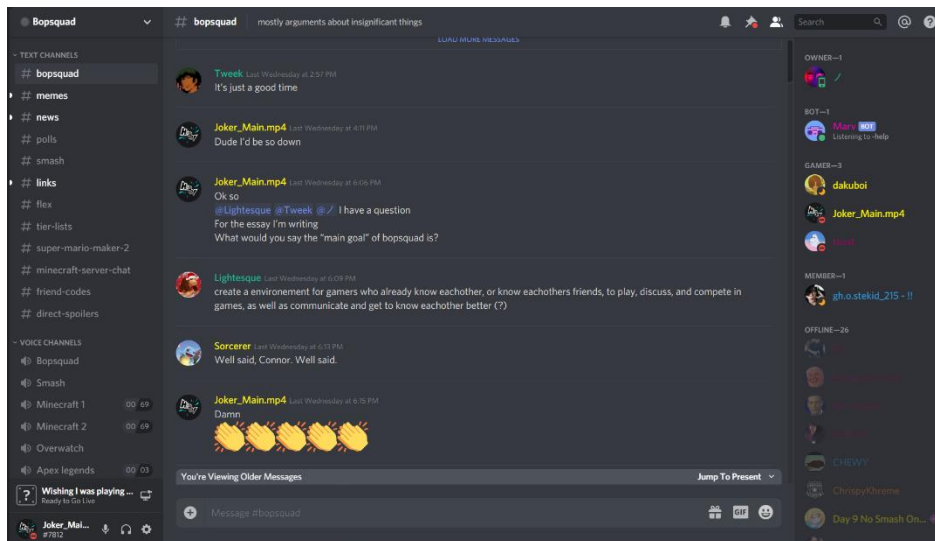
## **Discord Servers**

Now that I’ve laid the groundwork for what a Discourse Community is, I should explain *what* a Discord Server is. In short, a “Discord Server” is an online chat group that people can join and talk with people they don’t know either through Text Channels or Voice Channels, which I’ll explain in more depth later. These servers come in two main types: Open Servers and Private Servers. Open Servers are open to anyone: anyone can join, whether they know the owner of the server or not. Private Servers, on the other hand, can’t be joined randomly. They’re typically smaller, more focused groups that you need to be specifically invited into to join. That’s what The Bopsquad is: a Private Server. You can’t join it through just randomly joining, you need to

be invited. Normally, however, this would stop it from becoming a Discourse Community by barring anyone from joining. Luckily, this is not the case with the Bopsquad server because of how frequently the owners invite people into the server. They are constantly looking for new members through either people they meet in person or the recommendations of the trusted members of the server. For example, even though my friend Jordan has never met anyone in the server except for me, I was able to get him invited into the Server because I recommended him to the owners of the Server.

## Bopsquad: The Main Goal

Now that we know what Discourse Communities and Discord Servers are, the best place to start is the first characteristic: What is the Main Goal of “The Bopsquad”? Well, one of the owners, known as Lightesque, or his real name, Connor, said that the main goal is to “create [an] environment for gamers who already know eachother, or know eachothers friends, to play, discuss, and compete in games, as well as communicate and get to know eachother better.”



(Figure 1). This perfectly sums up why the server was created. As I, and many of the users on it, use the server to play games like *Super Smash Bros*.

Figure 1-I, known as Joker\_Main.mp4, asked Lightesque what the main goal of the Bopsquad is.

*Ultimate, Overwatch, Minecraft, and Pokémon*, as can be seen by the numerous voice chats and text channels that the server has, as well as how the membership of the server is structured. The

three people who created the server, Tweek, aka Nathan, ノ (the katakana for “No” in Japanese), aka Colin, and the previously mentioned Connor, have the “Owner” role in the server, giving them the power to ban or mute people, or add and remove things that are/aren’t needed on the server anymore. They, along with MoneySnake62, aka Cooper, know just about everyone on the server in person are also the most active members of the server. The next role down is the moderator role, which is primarily held by people the owners trust enough to also hold the power to ban or mute those who are deemed harmful to the server. After that are the gamer and member roles, with the only real difference being that the gamer role is given to members who actively participate in game sessions. These people, which include myself, typically only know one or two of the Owners or Moderators in real life.

### **Bopsquad: Experts and Novices**

However, one of the characteristics isn’t very well portrayed by the server roles: Experts vs Novices. For example, for Super Smash Bros., the players who are considered the experts, according to Connor and Nathan, are themselves, and two of the people with the gamer role, dakuboi and Inha (Figure 2). While it’s true that the gamer role and owner roles are vastly different in terms of server control, it doesn’t mean that the owners know more than the gamers, or that the gamers know more about the owners. In a way, every person on the server has something they are an expert in when it comes to

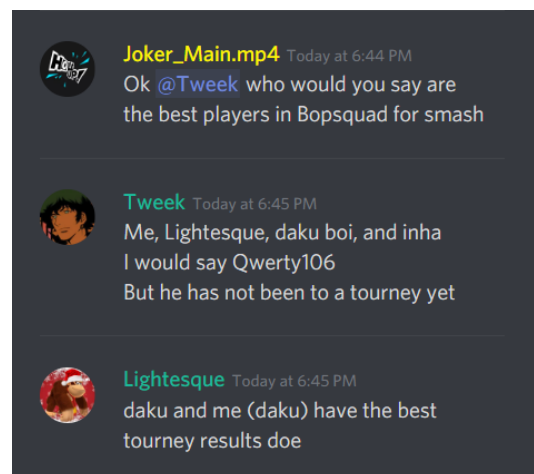


Figure 2-Nathan, Connor and I discuss who the best Super Smash Bros. Ultimate players are

information about video games, and it’s this relationship between all of the members that shows how we all mutually respect each other, even if some people have more server power than others.

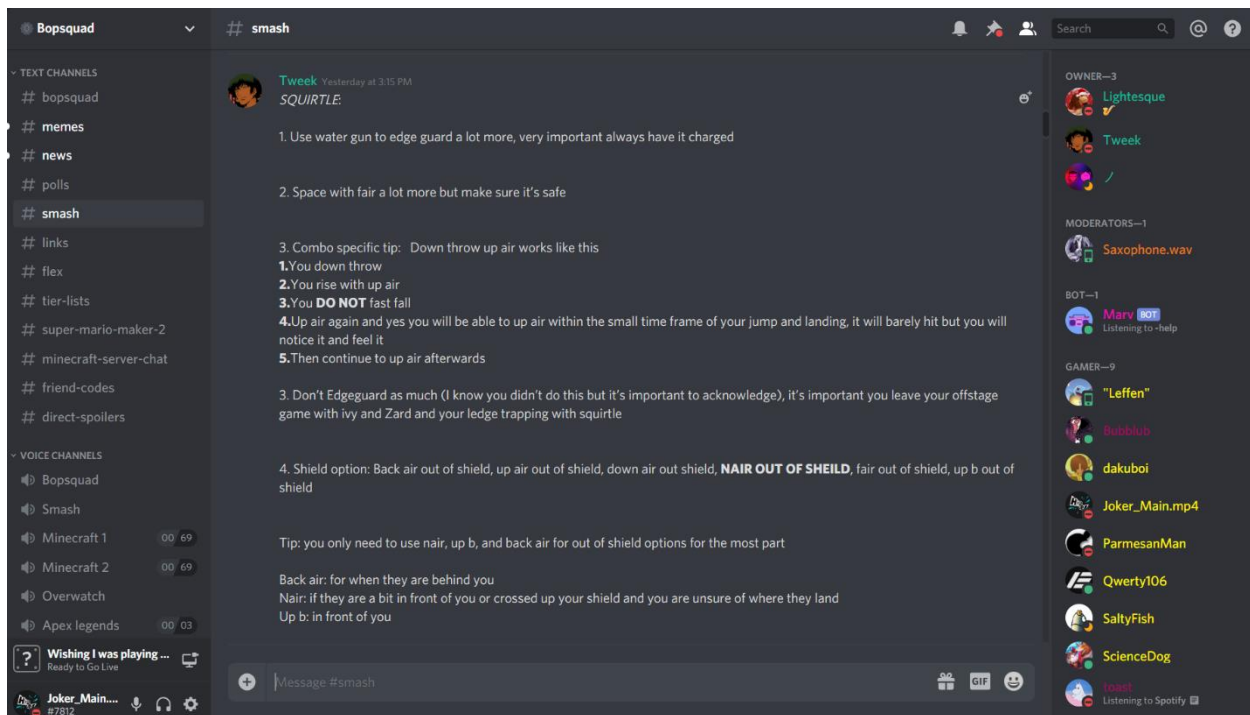


Figure 3-Tweek giving advice to another player for the character "Squirtle" in Super Smash Bros. Ultimate

## Bopsquad: Information

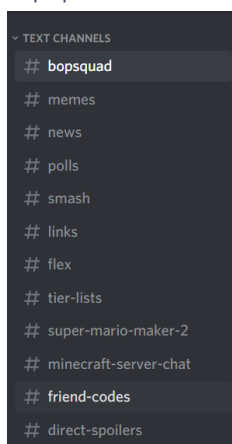
Speaking of the information we share, it mainly focuses on video games, with games made by Nintendo being the biggest focus. We often play games like Super Smash Bros. Ultimate together, along with other games like Pokémon and Minecraft. This information includes things like news regarding game software updates, content updates, news about new techniques when playing, and sharing general tips and tricks that each other have discovered while playing the game. For example, Tweek created a list of tips and techniques on using one of the characters in Super Smash Bros. Ultimate, Squirtle, including things like “Don’t Edgeguard as much” and “Shield option: Back air out of shield, up air out of shield, down air out of shield, NAIR OUT OF SHEILD, fair out of shield, up b out of shield.” (Figure 3). These kinds of information are shared around by everyone, even some of the novices, as it’s very easy to constantly discover things in video games that no one else knew about.

## Bopsquad: Lexis

In that last example, many of those words either aren't actually words or don't make sense in the sentence. That's because terms like "fair", "up b", "out of shield", and "Edgeguard" are the Bopsquad's "Lexis". The server has many kinds of terms that, if used in a setting outside of the gaming sphere, simply wouldn't make any sense. Some of these terms come from video games. For example, the term "fair" refers to a "forward aerial" move used by every single character in Super Smash Bros. Ultimate. The term "Edgeguard" refers to when your opponent in the game goes off of the game's arena, and you try to keep them from coming back onto the arena so they lose the match. There are also other terms used by every member of the Bopsquad server, not just by those who play specifically Smash Bros. One of the most common terms, "Pog/Poggers" is, as said in the document that user dakuboi made to help me document some of the "Lexis" we use, "[an] Expression of happiness, or excitement." (dakuboi, 1) It comes from an emote used on the streaming service "Twitch", which can be seen in the document provided by dakuboi below. But how and where do we share this information?

## Bopsquad: Genres of Communication

Figure 4.1-The Text Channels of The Bopsquad



Bopsquad has two main genres of communication: Text Channels and Voice Channels. The Text Channels are split into different categories depending on the games and topics talked about (Figure 4.1). In these Text Channels, we typically intercommunicate through having normal, casual conversations that you'd usually have with a friend over text. This creates an aura of familiarity and friendliness between all of the members of the server. For example, the main channel, fittingly called "Bopsquad" is mainly used for general conversations. In that channel, Tweek and I have had a conversation about

the new Pokémon game in this chat, while at another time we've had a random conversation about who the oldest person in the Bopsquad is. Another good example of a text channel is the "Smash" text channel, which is mainly used for talking about Super Smash Bros. Ultimate. One of the more recent conversations held on it was between dakuboi, "Leffen", and Maister, who talked about the differences between the two characters Lucina and Marth. The other kind of genre that we use are Voice Channels. In these channels

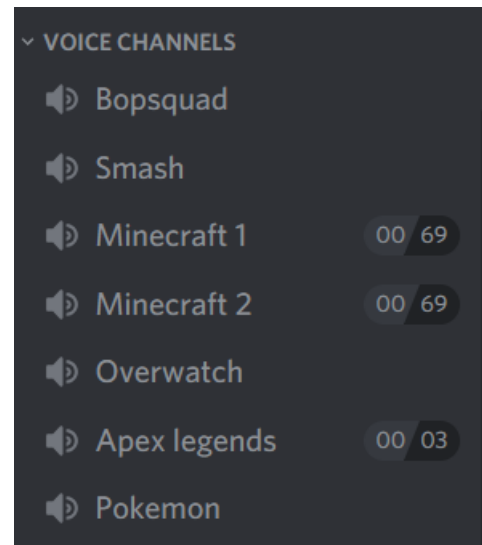


Figure 5-The Voice Channels of The Bopsquad

we communicate through talking to each other while playing the same video game at the same time or having a conversation about the game in question. Typically, you join the Voice Channel that relates to what game you are playing or want to talk about (Figure 5). However, the Voice Channels are not as frequently used as Text Channels, so we only have Channels for Minecraft, Overwatch, Super Smash Bros., Apex Legends, Pokémon, and a general Voice Channel.

## Analysis and Conclusion

All of these factors and characteristics come together to create a unique community that welcomes new members while making it a small, focused community that puts its members and goals before anything else. Each person in the community is dedicated to learning the games that we play together so that we can learn, improve, and most importantly, enjoy our time together.

## Sources

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