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**BAKALaura DARBS**

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**THE ANALYSIS OF THE READER-PLAYER  
CATEGORIES IN INTERACTIVE FICTION**

**INTERAKTĪVĀS PROZAS LASĪTĀJU-SPĒLĒTĀJU  
KATEGORIJU ANALĪZE**

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Adviser: prof. Irina Novikova

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## ANOTĀCIJA

Interaktīvā proza un tās lasītājs-spēlētājs ir samērā jauna tehnokultūras parādība, tāpēc līdz šim maz pētīta. Bakalaura darbā analizēta sešpadsmit lasītāju-spēlētāju identificēšanās ar interaktīvās prozas *Viņa Majestātes kuģis "Straujais"* autoru vai varoni ar mērķi noteikt sakarību starp lasītāju-spēlētāju identificēšanās tipu un viņu dzimumu, vecumu un interesēm saistībā ar datorspēlēm un literatūru. Lielākā daļa lasītāju-spēlētāju biežāk ir identificējušies ar interaktīvās prozas varoni, savukārt viena vecākās paaudzes lasītāja ar interesi par literatūru galvenokārt ir identificējusies ar interaktīvās prozas autoru.

**Atslēgas vārdi:** interaktīvā proza, lasītāja-spēlētāja identificēšanās.

## ABSTRACT

Interactive fiction and the figure of reader-player are a comparatively new techno-cultural phenomenon; therefore it has been so far little studied. The Bachelor thesis presents the analysis of sixteen readers-players' identification with the author or the character of the interactive fiction *His Majesty's Ship Impetuous* with the aim to find a link between the readers-players identification type and their age, gender and interests related to literature and computer games. Most of the readers-players have more often identified with the character of the interactive fiction text, whereas one older woman with an interest in literature has mainly identified with the author of the interactive fiction text.

**Key words:** interactive fiction, reader-player identification.

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## INTRODUCTION

Any text, written by an author, can be considered a game to a certain degree between the author and the reader in his reading and interpreting process. The reader has to build links between the matters one already knows and the new information that is included in the text. In the reading process, the reader's imagination, feelings and emotions are activated and focused on the plot, characters and affect. Consciously or unconsciously, the reader associates the text with the known contexts (information about the author and social, historical and geographical background), tries to formulate the essence and meaning of the text and compare one's views with author's ideas (intentions) and hidden messages. Therefore, the process of reading a text is a communication in the triangle of the reader, the text and the author.

The theme of the research is the reader-player of interactive fiction. The research subject is the reader-player's identification with the author or the character of interactive fiction. The research object is the reader-player of interactive fiction.

In interactive fiction, the reader-player becomes its author (co-author) and plays the role of one or more characters by speaking on behalf of them, imagining and predicting the course of their actions. Therefore, in the previously-described communication process (reader-text-author), the reader-player becomes the leading figure. Reading and writing a text turn into a unique and interconnected process – a game in which the reader-player not only highlights one's own experience, including the reading experience, predicts, employs imagination and empathy and interprets, but also makes decisions, solves conflicts and takes responsibilities. When making decision and solving conflicts, the reader-player of interactive fiction can identify with the author who tries to create an interesting and dynamic story or take the role of a character in the story and consider the game as a conversation with oneself (self-revelation).

Interactive fiction, consequently its reader-player, is comparatively new phenomenon; therefore, so far, it has been little studied. The most significant scholars of interactive fiction are Montfort (2005), Pierce (1994), Desilets (1989), Nelson (2001), Maher (2006), Niesz and Holland (1984), Randall (1988), Ziegfeld (1989), Lancy and Hayes (1988), Pope (2010), Manovich (2001, 2003).

The purpose of the research is to argue about a synergic complexity of the link between the identification type of the reader-player in the reading process of interactive fiction and one's age, gender and interests related to literature and computer games.

The hypothesis is the following: in the reading-playing process of interactive fiction, the reader-player's identification with a character or the author depends on the variables of one's age, gender and interests related to literature and computer games.

The enabling objectives of the research to achieve the purpose of the research are the following:

1. to study the literature relevant to the research;
2. to analyse previous studies related to the reader-player of interactive fiction;
3. to find an appropriate interactive fiction text for the research;
4. to create a questionnaire for the readers-players of interactive fiction;
5. to study the motivations behind the choices made by sixteen readers-players in the reading-playing process of the selected interactive fiction text and give questionnaires to them;
6. to summarize, compare and interpret the information.

The research methods were a literature review and a case study that included a questionnaire.

The present research consists of three chapters, the introduction, the conclusions and the theses. Chapter 1 is devoted to the literature review. Chapter 2 contains four subchapters that present the description of the research methodology, the research participants, the interactive fiction work selected for the research and the research procedure. Chapter 3 consists of five subchapters and is devoted to the findings.

# 1. LITERATURE REVIEW

To study a reader-player of interactive fiction, one has to understand the meaning of the concept *interactive fiction*. There are different views among theorists how to define the concept *interactive fiction*. Pierce indicates that the phenomenon in a broader sense is ‘any artefact – whether it be a book, theatre script, image, automaton, or computer game – that allows a reader to make choices that determine the unfolding of a story’ (1994: 363). Other scholars, e.g., Desilets, describe it narrowly as ‘a computer-based form of literature in which the reader plays the part of an important character, deciding, within limits, what actions that character will take’ (1989: 75) *A Dictionary of Media and Communication* (2014) offers two definitions of the term:

- A videogame genre also known as adventure games in which players are given a goal and must solve puzzles or fight opponents in order to reach it. Such games can be text-based such as *Adventure* (1976) or graphics-based such as *Myst* (1993).
- A hypertext novel with multiple branching plots. (Online 2).

To compare various explanations of the term *interactive fiction*, one can conclude that *interactive fiction* refers to a computer software programme in various forms (graphic/visual, audio and/or text-based) with game elements and a different level of interactivity (pre-determined choices and branching or free text input and parsing).

Interactive fiction is a comparatively new phenomenon. Nelson outlines that ‘the history of interactive fiction in the twentieth century has yet to be written’ (2001: 342). Interactive fiction has approximately a forty-year long history although Montfort states that ‘closely related forms go back centuries or even, in case of the riddle, millennia’ (2005: 155-157). He continues that interactive fiction in the form of the text adventure ‘was a significant part of the early computing experience’ (ibid.: 115) and ‘became the first best-sellers on PCs during the early 1980s’ (ibid.).

According to *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and Maher (2006), one of the first most important works that laid the foundation for interactive fiction was *Hunt the Wumpus*, which was launched in 1972. It is a game where the player has to move around in a network of tunnels and kill creatures called the wumpus. The player can give a simple text commands to indicate a room number where to go and an action to be carried out. An example of the game session is presented below:

```
Bats nearby!  
You are in room 14  
Tunnels lead to 4 13 15  
Shoot, Move or Quit (S-M-Q)? m  
Where to? 4
```

You are in room 4  
Tunnels lead to 3 5 14  
Shoot, Move or Quit (S-M-Q)? m  
Where to? 5

You are in room 5  
Tunnels lead to 1 4 6  
Shoot, Move or Quit (S-M-Q)? s  
No. of rooms (0-5)? 4  
Room #? 1  
Room #? 2  
Room #? 3  
Room #? 4

1

2

3

4

Missed!

You are in room 5

Tunnels lead to 1 4 6

Shoot, Move or Quit (S-M-Q)? (Maher, 2006).

The functionality of this game is similar to the one of the interactive fiction text selected for the research.

According to Maher, the first true work of interactive fiction, created in the 1970s, was *Adventure*. It is ‘an interactive textual simulation of caving’ (ibid.) with role-playing game elements, inspired by the table game *Dungeons and Dragons*. Later it was expanded with other characters such as a troll and elves. As outlined by *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, ‘text-based games of its like have since been known commonly as electronic adventure games’ (Online 4). *Adventure* and its popularity provided the inspiration for the next important interactive fiction work *Zork*, created by the MIT computer science department.

Interactive fiction has been mostly discussed in the IT and computer science related literature; however, some authors have approached the subject from a literary perspective. For example, Niesz and Holland (1984) have examined the essence of interactive fiction, its historical development and how it differs from other literary forms; Randall (1988) has attempted to determine the features of literariness in interactive fiction; Ziegfeld (1989) has tried to find out whether interactive fiction can be classified as a new genre; Desilets (1989) has described the thinking process involved in interactive fiction; Smith and Bates (1989) have tried to develop a theory of narrative for interactive fiction. Montfort (2005) has presented the most thorough study of interactive fiction covering the subject from different aspects: the essence, the history, the link to other literary and gaming forms, the most significant works of the field.

There are several studies on the reader-player of interactive fiction. Lancy and Hayes (1988) have carried out a study to determine the influence of interactive fiction on reluctant readers, while Pope (2010) has studied readers' response to interactive fiction and identified the most significant factors which influence the readers' experience of interactive fiction.

In general sense, interactive fiction is considered new media. As Manovich outlines, 'new media are the cultural objects which use digital computer technology for distribution and exhibition' (2003: 16-17). Thus, interactive fiction falls under new media because it is a computer program that can be read only with a help of an electronic device.

Manovich describes new media as 'a convergence of two separate historical trajectories: computing and media technologies' (2001: 20). Both fields started to develop 'in the 1830s with Babbage's Analytical Engine and Daguerre's daguerreotype' (ibid.) Eventually, 'the translation of all existing media into numerical data accessible through computers' (ibid.) resulted in new media – 'graphics, moving images, sounds, shapes, spaces, and texts that have become computable; that is, they comprise simply another set of computer data' (ibid.).

As Manovich highlights, all new media 'share a number of common qualities' (2003: 17) that separate them from old media. Those principles are 'numerical representation, modularity, automation, variability, and transcoding' (ibid.) which characterize also interactive fiction. Namely, numerical representation is expressed through the fact that interactive fiction is 'composed of digital code' (Manovich, 2001: 27), is 'described mathematically' (ibid.) and is 'subject to algorithmic manipulation' (ibid.) or, in other words, it is 'programmable' (ibid.). Modularity refers to the 'fractal structure of new media' (ibid: 30). The software program of interactive fiction is modular because it consists of 'collections of discrete samples (pixels, polygons, voxels, characters, scripts)' (ibid.) that are 'assembled into larger-scale objects but continue to maintain their separate identities' (ibid.). Automation combines the previously-mentioned principles and 'allows for the automation of many operations involved in media creation, manipulation, and access' (ibid.: 32). There are many templates or algorithms available for the authors of interactive fiction to simplify the creation process of interactive fiction. Besides that, the reader-player of interactive fiction gives specific commands for the computer to understand and respond appropriately. Variability is very characteristic item for interactive fiction. It is visible through various possible variants of one interactive fiction text. Transcoding in general refers to 'two distinct layers – the "cultural layer" and the "computer layer"' (ibid.: 46) which form the new media object. In interactive fiction, on the level of representation, the 'cultural layer' is text, story, plot, characters, choices, meaning and point of view that 'belongs on the side of human culture, automatically entering in a dialog' (ibid.: 45) with other texts. 'But on another level, it is a computer

program’ (Manovich, 2001: 45) which consists of computer language, data structures, functions and variables and ‘enters into a dialog’ (ibid.) with other computer programs.

In relation to new media, there is a general idea that interactivity describes the process where ‘the user can [...] interact with a media object. In the process of interaction the user can choose which elements to display or which paths to follow, thus generating a unique work. In this way the user becomes the co-author of the work’ (ibid.: 55). However, Manovich states that ‘to call computer media “interactive” is meaningless – it simply means stating the most basic fact about computers’ (ibid.) because ‘once an object is represented in a computer, it automatically becomes interactive’ (ibid.). Instead, he suggests describing interactive structures and operations.

A popular new media structure, one type of interactive fiction structures is ‘branching-type interactivity’ (ibid.: 38) which refers to variability principle. As Manovich outlines,

the term refers to programs in which all the possible objects the user can visit form a branching tree structure. When the user reaches a particular object, the program presents her with choices and allows her to choose among them. Depending on the value chosen, the user advances along a particular branch of the tree. In this case the information used by a program is the output of the user’s cognitive process (ibid.).

Branching-type interactivity forms the structure of the interactive fiction text selected for the present research.

Interactive fiction contains game elements. Ludology is ‘the study of games and gaming, especially video games’ (Online 15). As Frasca indicates, ‘the current state of videogame research is mainly driven by scholars who try to explain computer games through previously existing media’ (Online 7). Namely, Laurel (2014) studies computer games through the perspective of drama, Murray (1997) - through storytelling and narrative, and Manovich (2001) - through film. Frasca (1999) indicates that the field where computer games are analysed as games is usually almost ignored.

According to Frasca, *a game* is ‘an activity organized under a system of rules that defines a victory or a defeat, a gain or a loss’ (1999: 3). The process of a game can be described as shown in Figure 1.1 (ibid.:4).

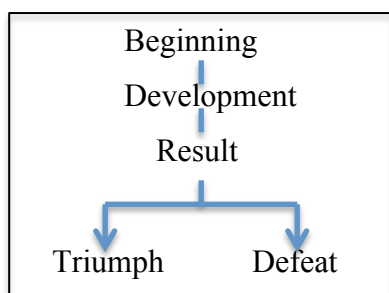


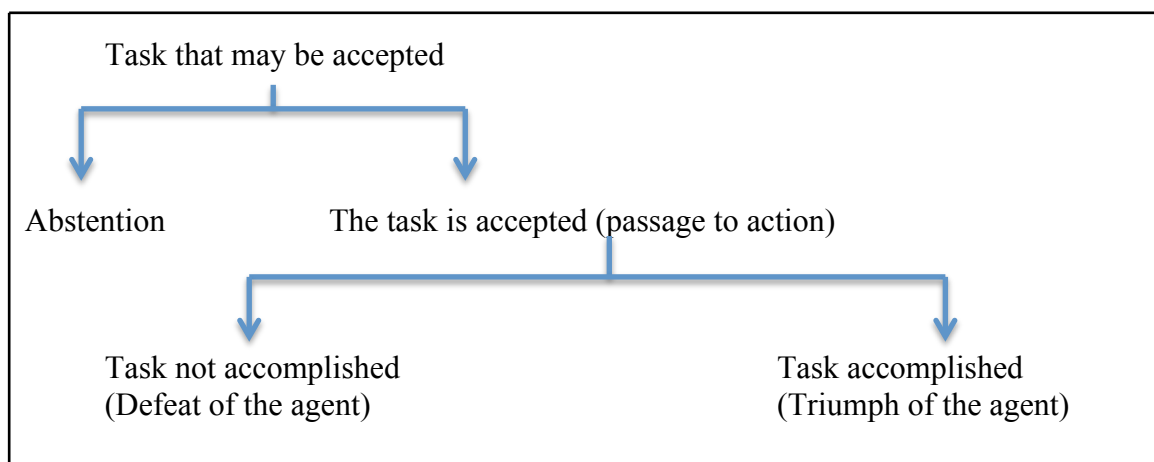
Figure 1.1 The process of a game

The beginning is ‘the step where the rules are defined and accepted by the players’ (ibid.), ‘the game itself is played during the development’ (ibid.) and ‘the result is the final step, where, according to the rules, a winner and/or loser are designated’ (ibid.).

Frasca argues that some scholars consider computer games ‘as a new form of or as an expansion of traditional narrative or drama’ (ibid.: 1) because they ‘share many elements with stories: characters, chained actions, endings, settings’ (ibid.). As Montfort states,

theorists of narrative have carefully distinguished between the level of underlying content (corresponding to the simulated world in interactive fiction) and that of expression (corresponding to the textual exchange between computer and user) since the mid-1960s, when the field of narratology began to develop, but IF systems have not yet made use of this distinction (2007: iv).

One can compare interactive fiction and narratology using ‘the agent scheme of Claude Bremond’s “Logique du recit”’ (ibid.: 4) where ‘the options (“possible narratifs”) for the willing agent’ (ibid.) are described (see Figure 1.2 which is drawn according to the picture in Frasca’s study).



*Figure 1.2 Bremond’s agent scheme*

As Frasca indicates, ‘Bremond’s scheme is similar to the scheme of the process of a game (see Figure 1.1). Besides that, it depicts ‘the possibilities that the author has at any moment of the story, to deal with an agent’s actions’ (ibid.:5), and it can be applied to describe a certain problem (a choice) in an adventure videogame (interactive fiction) that have to be solved (made) to proceed with the game. Namely, using Bremond’s logic the adventure videogame (interactive fiction) could be presented in the following way: ‘the player’s performance would determine a particular set of functions, from the point of view of the character that he is controlling. One particular combination of functions (plot) is the winning one; all the rest will lead to the player’s defeat’ (ibid.). Frasca concludes that although they share this similarity, it does not mean that games and narrative are equivalent because ‘Bremond’s scheme does not

represent narrative itself, but the possible narratives [...] that are available for the author when she is crafting the story' (Frasca, 1999: 6) and similarly, games are described outlining their possibilities (winning or losing), but not a specific session of a game.

In the empirical part of the present bachelor thesis, the relationship between reading patterns and gender is identified. Several previous studies focus on these matters. For example, some scholars argue that 'gender profoundly affects how and what we read, and what we read affects our sense of self' (Gardiner, 1987: 97). As an example is mentioned the fact how adults deliver books to children: both boys and girls receive boys' books (e.g., adventure stories), but girls' books are rarely given to boys. Thus, men become "'resisting readers"' to women's literature and women are "immasculated" by androcentric' texts' (ibid.). However, it is concluded that 'women have developed a variety of resisting, empathetic, and empowering reading strategies' (ibid.) Besides that, Flynn states that 'women more often arrive at meaningful interpretations of stories because they more frequently break free of the submissive entanglement in a text and evaluate characters and events with critical detachment' (1983: 251). She points out that 'some male students react unempathetically to literature about vulnerable women characters' (ibid.), whereas 'women are often receptive to texts in that they attempt to understand them before making a judgment upon them' (ibid.) highlighting that 'women have interpretive powers' (ibid.) such as 'a willingness to listen, a sensitivity to emotional nuance, an ability to empathize with and yet judge' (ibid.). Schweickart suggests a strategy how women should read: 'when a woman reads a man's text, she must engage in a "dialectic of emancipatory struggle"; when she reads a woman's text, however, she can shift to a "dialectic of communication" in which reader and writer engage one another in "intimate conversation"' (ibid.).

Bortolussi, Dixon and Sopčak state that although 'the relationship of gender to reading continues to be a prominent topic in literary and cultural studies' (2010: 299), there are only a few thorough empirical studies and 'very little is actually known about the effects of gender on reading' (2010: 299). In their study, they challenge the existing theories. As they outline, classical literary theory represents 'a formalist perspective based on the notion of a universal, ideal, or implied reader, precluding any consideration of gender as a conditioning variable in the reading process' (ibid.: 300), while feminist scholars of the 1970s and 1980s (some of them are mentioned previously in the text) focused on the female reader, claiming that male literature forces women 'to identify with a male perspective and thus think and feel like men' (2010: 300). Bortolussi, Dixon and Sopčak describe another scholar Garcia's (1984) views: 'women readers cannot empathize with either male characters or female characters created by male authors' (ibid.) because in male literature, 'plots are often based on heroic action,

women are depicted in a limited number of stereotypical roles, and a genuine women's perspective is absent' (ibid.) In their study, Bortolussi, Dixon and Sopčak challenge the existing 'gender-match hypothesis' (ibid.: 300) that the reader prefers stories with the leading character of the same gender. The results of their study show that 'both men and women rated texts higher on the story-world items when they had a male protagonist, inconsistent with the gender-match prediction' (ibid.: 299).

## 2. THE OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH PROCESS

This chapter is devoted to the description of the methodology applied in the research. Namely, the details are given about the research method and the research object followed by the description about the research base and the steps of the research procedure.

### 2.1 Methodology

The research method was a case study that included a questionnaire. According to Gillham, *a case* is defined as:

- a unity of human activity embedded in the real world;
- which can only be studied or understood in context;
- which exists in the here and now;
- that merges in with its context so that precise boundaries are difficult to draw (2000; 1).

Gillham (2000) outlines that a case can be an individual, a group, an institution, a community, or one can study multiple cases. He defines a case study as ‘one which investigates the above to answer specific research questions [...] and which seeks a range of different kinds of evidence, evidence which is there in the case setting, and which has to be abstracted and collated to get the best possible answers to the research questions’ (ibid.: 1-2). A case study ‘employs a variety of methods to study the cases’ (Scott and Marshall, 2015). One of the methods applied in case study can be, for example, questionnaire. In the description of the research results, both the qualitative and the quantitative approach were applied.

### 2.2 The Description of the Research Participants

In the research, sixteen cases were analysed and interpreted. More precisely, sixteen readers-players of both genders (eight female and eight male persons) in four age groups (three teenagers, five young adults, six adults and two seniors from 17-62 years) with different interests regarding literature and computer games (four with an interest in both literature and computer games, four with an interest in computer games, four with an interest in literature and four without any interest in computer games and literature) participated in the research. All the participants of the research have good knowledge of the English language and satisfying computer skills. The number of the studied cases was selected according to the purpose of the research.

The young research participants are pupils at the grammar school in Cesis. Their interests were identified in the consultations with their teachers and checked with the help of the questionnaire. The older readers-players were selected from the circle of the author of the research's acquaintances. All of them have at least a bachelor's degree, but their occupation differs (see Table 2.1).

*Table 2.1 The Overview of the Older Participants of the Research*

Gender	Age	Interests	Occupation
Woman	36	Computer games and literature	Office administrator at a construction company
Woman	55	-	Owner of a trade company
Woman	59	Literature	Teacher of Latvian and Latvian literature
Woman	62	Computer games	Accountant at a private company
Man	33	Computer games	IT specialist at an IT company
Man	34	Computer games and literature	Physics teacher
Man	47	Literature	Self-employed
Man	59	-	Unemployed, educated in the law

Before the reading-playing process, the readers-players were informed that, on a separate sheet of paper, they had to write their choices and give a detailed explanation of the motivation behind them. Each reader-player read the selected text at different times in natural circumstances. Some of them read it in the presence of the author of the research, but some of them worked individually. All readers-players used computers in order to read the selected text. After the reading-playing process, the author of the research gave each reader-player a questionnaire (see Appendix 1) to find out:

- their feelings and emotions in the reading-playing process (questions Nr 3, 5, and 7);
- their understanding of the content and form of the text (questions Nr 1, 2, 8 and 9);
- their attitude towards the selected text and interactive fiction in general (questions Nr 4, 6, 10, 11 and 12).

### **2.3 The Description of the Interactive Fiction Work Selected for the Research**

For the research, the interactive fiction work *His Majesty's Ship Impetuous* by R. Lafore, created in 1980, reimplemented in 2011 by J. Maher was selected because it was mentioned as

an example of interactive fiction in a scientific article *Interactive Fiction* by Niesz and Holland (1984), and it is characterized by the five principles outlined by Manovich (2001).

The other reasons of its selection are:

- it is rather short and does not require a lot of time to read;
- it is a simple, realistic story;
- it has an easy-understandable interface;
- the offered choices are pre-determined, therefore, more comparable.

The reading process of the selected interactive fiction work in all possible sessions (also in the case of a minimum number of choices) always results in a long story that is a realistic and describes an important sea voyage in the war times. A ship with the name *Impetuous* sails in the Mediterranean Sea from the coasts of Spain to England and later returns back to England. The captain of the ship whose role was formally played by all readers has to make several important decisions linked to patriotism, duty for country and the King:

- to punish or pardon a man who expressed disrespect for his duty, country and the King after the loss of his older brother, a competent and beloved lieutenant, who died in the line of duty in a battle against the enemy;
- to avoid the risk or attack the enemy's ship in order to gain great wealth;
- to protect the ship of the allies (Americans) with a woman on board or not to involve in the battle according to the orders of the admirals;
- to start the battle with the enemy or wait for the rest of the fleet;
- to continue the fight or try to save the lives of the crew.

Captain's several choices refer to his relationship with the crew members:

- the captain has to make the decision himself or take into account the opinions of other crew members;
- for a position to replace a late crew member, he has to choose either a skilful but ambitious person or obedient but occasionally absent-minded one.

Some choices are less important:

- to drink wine or not to drink it;
- to eat, to eat alone or not to eat;
- to drink coffee alone or serve it also for others.

The reader-player can manipulate not only the main character, the captain, but with the selected choices influence the course and the result of the plot. Based on the made choices, there are additional story lines or some parts are left out. The text is written in the third-person

past tense employing informal style of language. Some of the main ideas of the long story are the following:

- a person's life is the sum of many choices;
- it is easier to judge and criticize the choices made by other people than by oneself;
- one's fate does not always depend on one's made choices;
- it is sometimes difficult to choose because there is a conflict between a duty to the homeland and the will to be compassionate and helpful.

When identifying oneself with the captain, the reader is forced to think about moral issues and values (wealth, honour and glory, the value of life).

Technically, the interaction between the reader-player and the author is rather simple. In the introduction part prior the start of the story, the reader – player is formally given the main role in the story and has to enter one's name which is later used everywhere in the text whenever the main character, the captain, is mentioned. The next step is the selection of the reader-player's gender although the main character remains a male figure in the text. Then, the story begins. After reading some paragraphs of the story, the reader-player is given two or more options to choose from. This process repeats several times in the story: the reader-player is asked to choose approximately 16-20 times in the course of the story based on the selection one has made before. The interface of the software, therefore, is very simple providing only the basic functionality without any animated graphic or audio features. In Figure 2.3, it is possible to see a visual example of the interface of the selected interactive fiction text.

"Master-At-Arms!" Rozite shouted. "Take this man below and place him in irons. I'll deal with him in the morning." Midshipman Fallow was led away, still sobbing.

"Would you be wanting your dinner now, sir?" Millby asked.

Captain Rozite glared at him.

<input checked="" type="radio"/> "It's well past the dinner hour, is it not? What do you think, Millby?"
<input type="radio"/> "No! I'll tell you when you're needed, Millby!"
<input type="radio"/> "I'll take my dinner in my quarters, Millby."
<input type="radio"/> "Yes, thank you, Millby."

**Next**

*Figure 2.3 Visual example of the interface of the selected interactive fiction text*

## **2.4 The Research Procedure**

The research procedure applied in this research consisted of eight steps.

1. The first step was to select an appropriate interactive fiction text.
2. The second step was to create a questionnaire.
3. The third step was to find sixteen readers-players.
4. The fourth step was to give instructions to each reader regarding the requirement to record the selected choices and the motivation behind them.
5. In the fifth step, each reader-player read the text and submitted the written description of his choices and motivation to the author of the research.
6. The sixth step was to give the questionnaire to each reader-player.
7. In the seventh step, each reader-player filled out the questionnaire and submitted it to the author of the research.
8. The final step was to sum up and interpret the results.

To sum up, this chapter presents the description of the research methodology, the research participants, the interactive fiction work selected for the research and the research procedure. The next chapter is devoted to the results of the research.

### 3. FINDINGS

This chapter presents the analysis of sixteen readers-players' identification with the author or the character of the interactive fiction *His Majesty's Ship Impetuous*, their perception and understanding of the text and emotions originated in the reading process.

#### 3.1 The Readers-Players Interested in Both Computer Games and Literature

*Table 3.2 The overview of the identification type of the readers-players with an interest in computer games and literature*

Age	Gender	Total number of the selected choices	Identification with the author	Identification with the character
17	Female	17	0 (0%)	17 (100%)
18	Male	17	2 (12%)	15 (88%)
36	Female	19	6 (32%)	13 (68%)
34	Male	19	3 (16%)	16 (84%)

The data that are summed up in Table 3.2 above prove that the readers-players who are interested in both computer games and literature mainly identified with the character. All four cases motivated more than 60% of their choices by imagining themselves as the character.

Only in some choices, these four readers-players identified with the author. The 36-year-old woman read the text most often through the author's perspective in comparison to the other cases. Her motivations behind six choices proved that she had tried to model the further development in the story. For example, her aim was to extend tension and suspense in the story; therefore, she selected the choices that did not result in a direct confrontation with the enemy. The 34-year-old man linked his three choices with his previous experience in reading fiction. Namely, he is interested in texts that have at least one female character and describe military conflicts. The motivations behind two choices made by the 18-year-old man were connected with the necessity to present the character's choice as noble. Consequently, he wanted to involve also this aesthetic category in the story.

*Table 3.3 The results from the questionnaires of the readers-players with an interest in computer games and literature*

Question/Reader-Player	The teenage girl (17 years)	The young man (18 years)	The woman (36 years)	The man (34 years)
1. Did you understand the plot of the story?	Partly (some words were not understood)	Completely understood	Completely understood	Completely understood
2. Give the main idea of the text!	The captain's mission – to help the country in the fight against the enemy	To reach one's goals, one has to take risks	A person can have big dreams and plans, but circumstances are not always favourable in order to fulfil the dreams.	The decisions made in war times are not always the most reasonable ones.
3. Was the course of action in the text predictable?	Yes	No	Sometimes	No
4. What do you think about the provided choices in the text?	Interesting	Satisfactory	Sometimes too simple	Sometimes too difficult; one needs to think and analyse the situation
5. Which of your choices caused emotional experience (positive or negative emotions) for you?	The decision to attack caused negative emotions.	The choice to kill or pardon a man caused both positive and negative emotions.	Choices connected with human lives caused emotions.	The choices whether to attack caused emotions. The pace of action could be faster.
6. What is your opinion regarding the end	No opinion	Something was missing.	I wish I could have a stronger influence on it.	My influence on the end was too weak.

of the text?				
7. Did you feel like co-author of the text while reading it?	No	Yes	Sometimes	Sometimes
8. Was the interface of the text user-friendly?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Simple
9. Was the functionality of the program satisfactory?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Simple
10. Was it your first time reading interactive fiction?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
11. What is your opinion regarding interactive fiction (in comparison to traditional fiction)?	- I do not like to read on the computer.	+ A chance to be a co-author - One sometimes focuses not on the text, but more on the choices that were not selected.	+ A new reading technique - Too much time spent	+ Reading is a game. + One needs to analyse situations. - Interactive fiction is 'a mirage'; one and the same text means many versions of the text.
12. Do you plan to read other interactive fiction texts?	No	Yes	No	No

All respondents with an interest in computer games and literature stated that it had been the first time they read an interactive fiction text. All of them except the 34-year-old man were satisfied with the interface and functionality of the selected interactive fiction text. The man did not like its simplicity. Three of them except the teenage girl confirmed that they had understood the text, but their interpretations of the main idea differed. Namely, the teenage girl gave the summary of the text as the main idea, while the other three respondents offered a more generalized interpretation, thus creating a link between the depth of their understanding and their identification with the author (at least sometimes) (see Table 3.2).

Unlike female readers-players, the male readers-players denied that they had been able to predict the course of action in the story. Three readers-players confirmed that the choices related to human lives had caused emotions for them. In addition, the 34-year-old man revealed that the slow pace of action in the text caused him negative emotions.

It was interesting to note that it had been the young male adult who felt most frequently as a co-author in comparison to the 36-year-old woman and the 34-year-old man who felt only sometimes as co-authors. In contrast, the teenage girl had never felt as a co-author. These results matched the analysis of her choice motivations. Namely, all her motivations were connected with the role of the character.

The readers-players who had identified with the author at least several times were not satisfied with the end of the text. The older respondents wanted to have a stronger influence on the end of the text, while the teenage girl who identified only with the character did not have an opinion regarding the end of the text.

The opinions about the positive and negative aspects of interactive fiction differed among the respondents. The teenage girl did not mention any positive characteristics of interactive fiction while other respondents named both positive and negative features. The female readers-players mainly assessed the technical side of reading (reading using a computer; time required), whereas the male readers-players compared the intellectual aspects and the emotions originated from reading interactive fiction. In their opinion, the benefits of interactive fiction were the necessity to analyse situations and the chance to be a co-author. The young male adult was not satisfied with the feeling that he might have selected the wrong choices, while the man did not like the fundamental principle of interactive fiction: there is not one predetermined text, but many versions of a text.

To sum up, the readers-players interested in computer games and literature identify more often with the character, not the author. Besides that, the readers-players who identified with the author at least several times have a more thorough understanding of the text. Unlike the male readers-players, the female readers-players state that they could predict the course of

action in the text. They evaluate the technical side of reading, while the male readers-players compare the intellectual aspects and the emotions originated from reading interactive fiction.

### 3.2 The Readers-Players Interested in Computer Games

*Table 3.4 The overview of the identification type of the readers-players with an interest in computer games*

Age	Gender	Total number of the selected choices	Identification with the author	Identification with the character
17	Female	18	5 (28%)	13 (72%)
17	Male	18	1 (0.6%)	17 (99.4%)
62	Female	18	4 (22%)	14 (78%)
33	Male	19	1 (0.5%)	18 (99.5%)

When analysing the data in Table 3.4, one can conclude that the readers-players with an interest in computer games mainly identified with the character (on average – 87.2% times). The male computer game players identified with the character more often than female computer game players. One can explain this phenomenon with the fact that the men are most likely more passionate players and position themselves more as the players than the readers in the reading process.

*Table 3.5 The results from the questionnaires of the readers-players with an interest in computer games*

Question/Reader-Player	The teenage girl (17 years)	The teenage boy (17 years)	The female senior (62 years)	The man (33 years)
1. Did you understand the plot of the story?	Partly (some words were not clear; but the text in general was understood)	Yes	Yes	Yes
2. Give the main idea of the text!	The captain has a difficult job –	The text is about a captain	It does not lead to anything	Everything has its

	he has to navigate the ship, lead the mission and manage people.	who has to make choices.	good when a woman becomes the captain of the ship.	consequences.
3. Was the course of action in the text predictable?	No	No	My predictions very often did not fulfil	No, but some consequences of my choices could be predicted
4. What do you think about the provided choices in the text?	No opinion	Simple choices; not interesting. I wish I could offer my choices, not just select one from the offered variants.	Sometimes too simple	I like that my expectations did not materialize. I would expect that the woman on the ship was the admiral's daughter, but it was not true. I did not like that the provided options within one choice were cardinally opposite. They often did not significantly influence the plot.
5. Which of your choices caused emotional experience (positive or negative)	I did not feel any emotions.	More negative. I regretted some choices. I often had the feeling that other choices might	My most emotional choice was whether to live or die.	I was disappointed that my character, the captain, had regretted my/his

emotions) for you?		have been better.		decision immediately after the selection and asked for another solution.
6. What is your opinion regarding the end of the text?	Not interesting. My character died.	Unexpected	I did not like it. I wish it were a happy ending. I spent so much time trying to figure out which would be the best choice, but the end was terrible anyway. The reality is sad enough; in literature, I look for something lighter.	In general, I do not like happy ending. I prefer it to be better sad, but realistic (as in this case) than prettified and unrealistic.
7. Did you feel like co-author of the text while reading it?	Yes	No	Yes	No
8. Was the interface of the text user-friendly?	Boring, not interesting	Yes	Satisfactory	Simple, a standard version
9. Was the functionality of the program satisfactory?	Good	Simple	Satisfactory	A standard version
10. Was it your	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes, but I have

first time reading interactive fiction?				played various role-playing games.
11. What is your opinion regarding interactive fiction (in comparison to traditional fiction)?	- I consider this interactive fiction text as boring as traditional fiction. I do not see any differences.	+ I could try to create such kind of text which I like. Every time I read the text, I can create a different version of the text.  - As each reader has their own version of the text, it is difficult to compare the opinions about the text.	+ The reading process is more interesting. It is easier to force oneself to read.  - Traditional fiction has more sense.  Interactive fiction is more like a form of entertainment.	+ On one hand, I like that my thoughts can influence the result.  - On the other hand, it is boring. When reading fiction, I am interested in author's perspective and opinion.
12. Do you plan to read other interactive fiction texts?	No	Yes, but I would prefer such an interactive fiction text where I can insert my own options, not only chose pre-determined options.	Yes. I would only choose different topics.	No. I enjoy playing computer games, and they offer a higher level of interactivity.

When comparing four readers-players of different gender and age with an interest in computer games' views about the content and the form of the interactive fiction text and the emotions originated from the reading process, one can conclude that there are more

similarities than differences. Although the readers-players, in their opinion, understood the interactive fiction text (the teenage girl did not understand some words) and were satisfied with the functionality of the text, they formulated the main idea either as a brief summary of the text or as a general statement. Thus, the readers-players considered the interactive fiction text mainly as a role-playing game where its course of action was difficult to predict. The offered choices in the reading process were very important for the readers-active-players. Namely, there had to be more than two choices (yes/no options were not satisfactory) with a possibility to influence the result greatly.

The readers-active-players, except the teenage girl, shared similar evaluation regarding the positive and negative aspects of interactive fiction. Namely, in their opinion, the reading process of interactive fiction is more interesting than the one of traditional fiction. However, interactive fiction mainly presents the reader-player, not another person such as the author as it is with traditional fiction.

The readers-players' views on their identification with the author were different, but they matched the analysis of their choice motivations (see Table 3.4). Namely, although they have a great age difference (17 and 62 years), both female readers-players felt as the co-authors while reading the interactive fiction text. These feelings were the reason why they did not like the end of the story (both readers-players' stories had a tragic ending). They preferred a happy ending; however, they were not able to achieve it. The men did not feel as the co-authors while reading the interactive fiction text, and they did not express any dissatisfaction with the end of the text. It was unexpected for the teenage boy and satisfactory for the men.

The readers-players' different views on reading other interactive fiction texts is connected not with their gender, but mainly with their interests. Namely, the male readers-players preferred a higher level of interactivity in the reading process. The man highlighted that computer games always exceed interactive fiction in the level of interactivity, whereas the teenage boy would be satisfied with another interactive fiction text if it had a higher level of interactivity than the one of the interactive fiction text selected for the research.

The teenage girl's negative attitude towards interactive fiction can be explained with her response to the eleventh question in the questionnaire about the positive and negative aspects of interactive fiction in comparison to traditional fiction. Namely, she does not like any kind of fiction.

To sum up, the readers-players with an interest in computer games mainly identified with the character and considered the interactive fiction text as a role-playing game where its course of action was difficult to predict. In addition, unlike the men, the female readers-players felt as co-authors while reading the interactive fiction text. Besides that, the older

readers-players shared similar views on interactive fiction (the positive aspects is increased activity of the reader-player; the negative aspects are the changing nature of interactive fiction and absence of the author). Finally, there was a request for a higher level of interactivity in interactive fiction.

### 3.3 The Readers-Players Interested in Literature

*Table 3.6 The overview of the identification type of the readers-players with an interest in literature*

Age	Gender	Total number of the selected choices	Identification with the author	Identification with the character
18	Female	18	0 (0%)	18 (100%)
19	Male	18	0 (0%)	18 (100%)
58	Female	19	10 (53%)	9 (47%)
47	Male	18	8 (44%)	10 (56%)

There was a significant difference among the readers-players with an interest in literature when identifying with the character or the author. Both the teenage girl and the teenage boy identified with the character in all choices in the reading process of the interactive fiction text, whereas the 47-year-old man selected nearly half of the choices from the author's perspective, but the 58-year-old woman did so in more than half of their choices. The woman's frequent identification with the author can be explained with her professional interest in literature (she indicated the fact in her questionnaire).

*Table 3.7 The results from the questionnaires of the readers-players with an interest in literature*

Question/Reader-Player	The young woman (18 years)	The young man (19 years)	The woman (58 years)	The man (47 years)
1. Did you understand the plot of the story?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2. Give the main idea of the text!	In life, there are many possibilities and	The choices characterize the person. You are	In life, there is often a conflict between one's	The human being is responsible for

	many choices.	what you chose.	mind and feelings. The character (the captain) trusts his feelings more often.	the choices he/she makes.
3. Was the course of action in the text predictable?	Yes	Yes	I tried to predict the course of action, but it did not come true.	No
4. What do you think about the provided choices in the text?	Satisfying	Interesting choices	Sometimes - too homogenous, sometimes - insignificant, sometimes the number of the provided options within one choice - too high with minimal differences among them. One time, an important option was not included. The most interesting choice was to decide whom to promote as the second lieutenant.	Several options within several choices were not important. It led to an impression that they were included only because the creators of the interactive fiction text needed a higher number of options within one choice.
5. Which of your choices caused	The sad end of the story caused	I liked that my choice freed	They did not lead me to any	I did not feel anything

emotional experience (positive or negative emotions) for you?	negative emotions for me. I probably made a mistake in my selections, and therefore I died.	one character and gave him a happy future (at least, that is what I thought).	emotional experience, nor did present new ideas.	special, except in some cases I regretted my choice and wished I had selected a different option.
6. What is your opinion regarding the end of the text?	I cannot say. I should analyse my choices, but I do not know which choice influenced the end most.	I expected something similar.	I wanted to offer my text variants in order to have a stronger influence on the end of the text.	I expected something more interesting – not the death, but a meaningful outcome.
7. Did you feel like co-author of the text while reading it?	Yes	Yes. I determined the fate of the characters.	Yes	Yes
8. Was the interface of the text user-friendly?	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
9. Was the functionality of the program satisfactory?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
10. Was it your first time reading interactive fiction?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
11. What is your opinion regarding interactive fiction (in	+ It is a new experience. - The use of electronic devices to read	+ An interesting reading process. + The reading of interactive fiction forces to	+ Interactive fiction requires an enormous participation of the reader.	+ An unusual experience. - It was a rather long process of reading, and the

comparison to traditional fiction)?	interactive fiction can weaken the eyesight.	think more. - It is not possible to skip parts; everything has to be read in the right sequence; therefore, it is not possible to check the end to understand whether it is worth reading.	- Interactive fiction does not provide another point of view, nor does lead to emotional experience.	result is disappointing.
12. Do you plan to read other interactive fiction texts?	No because I do not like to read on the computer.	Yes because other texts might be even more interesting.	No because I do not like to read on electronic devices.	Yes, I might read some other interactive fiction texts.

All four readers-players with an interest in literature shared similar thoughts in several aspects. Namely, all of them stated that they had read the interactive fiction text for the first time, and they had understood it. All the readers-players formulated the main idea of the text as a general statement (life is choices; a human being is characterized by choices; a human being is responsible for one's made choices). The 58-year-old woman applied a slightly different approach – the main idea for her was the conflict between one's mind and feelings. All four readers-players stated that they had felt as co-authors in the reading process of the interactive fiction text. All of them were satisfied with the interface and functionality of the program. Besides that, all four readers-players named a similar advantage of interactive fiction – namely, reading interactive fiction is a new experience.

There were several differences among the readers-players with an interest in literature. Namely, when comparing the readers-players in different age groups, their thoughts about the offered choices differed. The younger readers-players evaluated the given choices as satisfying (the young woman) and interesting (the young man) and stated that they had experienced negative (the young woman) or positive (the young man) emotions in the reading process of the interactive fiction text. On the contrary, the older readers-players evaluated the

offered choices negatively (homogenous, insignificant, with minimal differences) and outlined that they had not felt any emotional experience in the reading process of the interactive fiction text.

The gender differences could be indicated in the disadvantages of interactive fiction. Namely, the 18-year-old and 58-year-old women stated that they would not read any other interactive fiction text because they do not like to read on the computer. It impairs the eyesight. In addition, the woman who is interested in literature professionally did not like the fact that interactive fiction did not lead to any emotional experience, nor did present another perspective on life. On the contrary, the male readers-players in this group wanted to read other interactive fiction texts. In addition, they shared similar opinion regarding the negative aspects of interactive fiction: it is difficult to evaluate an interactive fiction text before reading (the young man); the result differs from the expected outcome significantly (the man).

### 3.4 The Readers-Players Interested neither in Computer Games nor Literature

*Table 3.8 The overview of the identification type of the readers-players without any interest in computer games and literature*

Age	Gender	Total number of the selected choices	Identification with the author	Identification with the character
18	Female	18	0 (0%)	18 (100%)
19	Male	18	0 (0%)	18 (100%)
55	Female	18	2 (11%)	16 (89%)
59	Male	16	0 (44%)	16 (100%)

All of the readers-players in this group nearly always identified with the character. Only in two cases, the 55-year-old woman motivated her choice as an author. Namely, she selected the appropriate options in order to make the events in the interactive fiction text ‘more interesting’.

*Table 3.9 The results from the questionnaires of the readers-players without any interest in computer games and literature*

Question/Reader-Player	The young woman (18 years)	The young man (19 years)	The woman (55 years)	The man (59 years)
1. Did you	Yes	Yes	Partly. I did not	Not all. Why

understand the plot of the story?			find any logic for some characters. They did not make any sense.	did the ship return to the same place where it was randomly before?
2. Give the main idea of the text!	It is about a captain who leads a ship.	It is about the war and a captain whose role I had to play and had to make decisions what to do.	I did not look for any deep meaning in the story. I made decisions which choices to select. The end was anyway sad.	I could not formulate it because the events in the text sometimes were artificial and did not resemble the reality.
3. Was the course of action in the text predictable?	Yes	Yes	No	No. The course of action was not predictable because some situations in the text were artificial.
4. What do you think about the provided choices in the text?	Good choices	Satisfying	Some choices were very superficial. Some choices forced to think why one option is better than the other.	Some choices were artificially constructed. They did not resemble the reality. The author of the text does not have a clue what happens on a war ship in war times. There is a strict

				discipline. The one who serves a coffee knows whom to serve it. In war conditions, the decisions are made differently, not in the way shown in the text.
5. Which of your choices caused emotional experience (positive or negative emotions) for you?	It was sad that the captain died at the end of the story.	I liked that Millby was loyal and could be trusted.	I did not feel any special emotions. I felt like a participant of a game that did not understand the meaning of the game.	I liked the theme of the text - the events took place in the sea in the war times, but it was poorly written.
6. What is your opinion regarding the end of the text?	I did not have any choice at the end.	I liked it. I, the captain, experienced many adventures.	I wanted something more unusual.	I am not satisfied with the end of the story. Not doing anything, the ship sinks. If it sinks, then there should be at least a proper battle or a victory.
7. Did you feel like co-author of the text while	Yes	Yes	No	No. I imagined myself as the captain.

reading it?				
8. Was the interface of the text user-friendly?	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
9. Was the functionality of the program satisfactory?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
10. Was it your first time reading interactive fiction?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
11. What is your opinion regarding interactive fiction (in comparison to traditional fiction)?	+ The reading process was interesting. - I do not like to read long texts on the computer.	+ In interactive fiction, the reader can be part of the story. - No negative sides.	- It is not a serious reading, but rather a game.	+ I do not find anything positive. - As a reader, I am not interested in the possibility to influence something. Then I rather become the author and write my own story.
12. Do you plan to read other interactive fiction texts?	No. I do not like to read on the computer.	Yes	No, I read only news or look at pictures on the computer.	No, I do not like to read long texts on the computer.

All the readers-players in this group read the interactive fiction text for the first time. They shared similar opinion only regarding the functionality of the program. Namely, they were satisfied with its performance. However, three of the readers-players (except the young

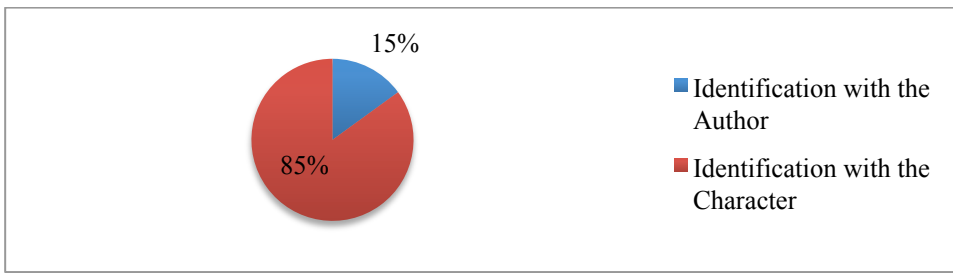
man) did not like to read long texts on the computer; therefore, they do not plan to read another interactive fiction text.

The readers-players' thoughts in other aspects did not match. Namely, their views differed in such positions as the content of the interactive fiction text, the ability to predict the course of action in the text, the given choices, the end of the story, the emotions originated in the reading process of the interactive fiction text, the advantages and disadvantages of interactive fiction in comparison to traditional fiction. Firstly, unlike the younger readers-players, the respondents of the older generation (both the woman and the man) stated that they had not understood the text. They were not concerned about some specific words or phrases and their semantic meaning, but about the plot of the story and several characters (in their opinion, meaningless events, insignificant characters). It is likely to be the reason why they had difficulties to formulate the main idea of the story. Secondly, unlike the young respondents, the older readers-players stated that the course of action had not been predictable. Thirdly, they were not satisfied with the provided choices. Particularly critical was the 59-year-old man who believed that the author of the interactive fiction text did not know the real war conditions in which he described the events in his text. Besides that, the older readers-players did not like the end of the story. The man wanted it to be more expressive, the woman – more unusual. Finally, both readers-players of the older generation indicated only the disadvantages of interactive fiction in comparison to traditional fiction. Namely, in the woman's opinion, the reading process of interactive fiction is not a serious process, but only a game, whereas the man supported the ideas that either the reader writes the whole text or he is given a complete text.

On the contrary, the younger readers-players in the group experienced positive emotions in the reading process of the interactive fiction text, and they were satisfied with the provided choices. Besides that, both the young man and the young woman felt as co-authors, and they considered the reading process of the interactive fiction text as a new, interesting experience.

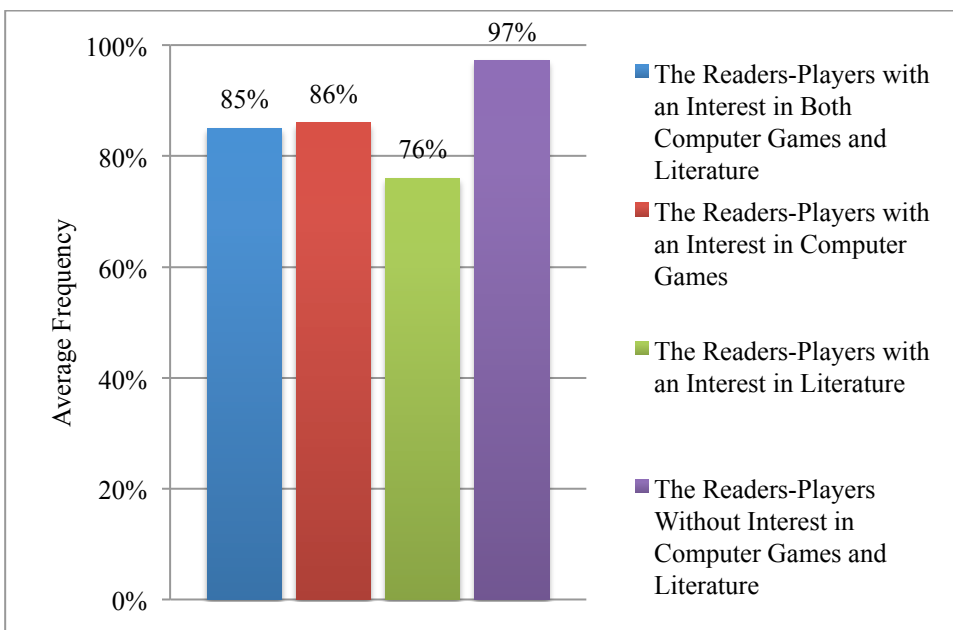
### **3.5 The Summary of All the Research Participants' Identification Types, Thoughts and Emotions in Relation to the Interactive Fiction Work**

The collected data indicate several similarities and differences among all the readers-players of different genders, age groups and interests. All the readers-players selected for the research read the text for the first time. To complete the interactive fiction text, they most often had to choose eighteen times. Nearly all readers-players more often identified with the character, not the author as shown in Figure 3.4.



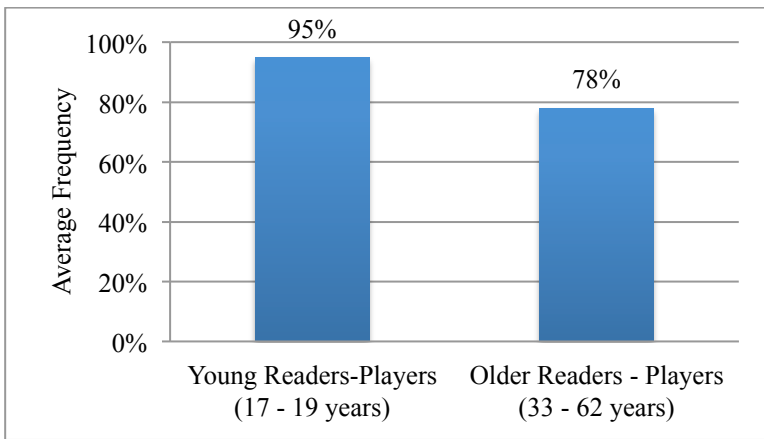
*Figure 3.4 The Relative Frequency of All Readers-Players' Identification*

The readers–players without any interest in computer games and literature most often identified with the character as indicated in Figure 3.5.

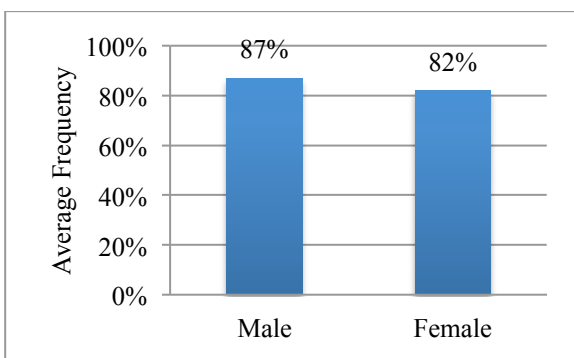


*Figure 3.5 The Average Figures about the Identification with the Character by Interest Groups*

The largest quantitative difference in relation to the identification with the character can be recognized not among the readers-players of different gender, but among those of different age as shown in Figures 3.6 and 3.7.

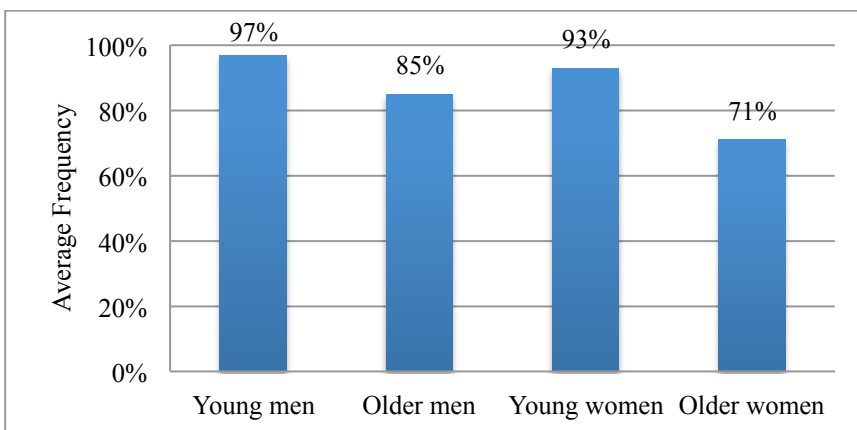


*Figure 3.6 The Average Figures about the Identification with the Character by Age Groups*



*Figure 3.7 The Average Figures about the Identification with the Character by Gender*

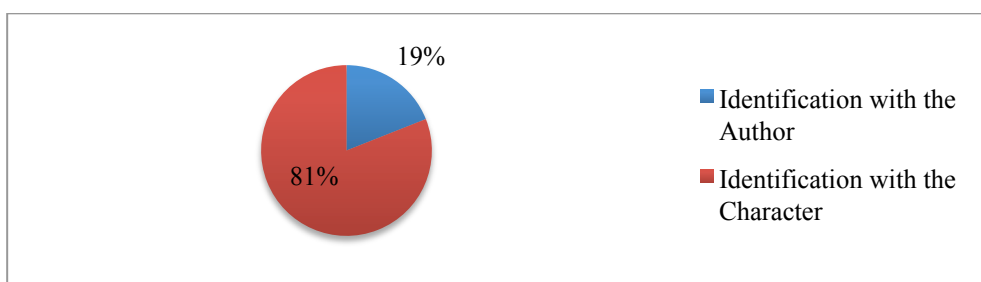
Comparatively, the young female readers-players (17 – 18 years) and the women of older generation (36 – 62 years) have quantitatively most distinctively identified with the character as indicated in Figure 3.8.



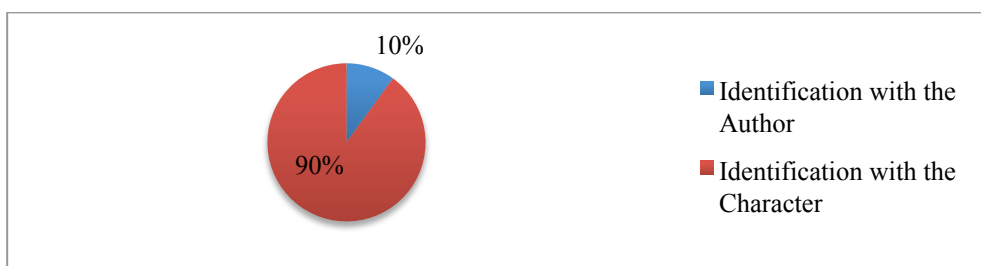
*Figure 3.8 The Average Figures about the Identification with the Character by Gender and Age Groups*

The older women identified with the character less often than the young female persons (the difference – 22.5%). This difference, in the author of the research’s opinion, might be related to their education level and the ability to better distance themselves from the interactive fiction text.

When comparing the frequency of identification with the author among the readers-players, the readers-players of the older generation (33 – 62 years) with an interest in literature more often identified with the author, whereas in the group of young people (17 – 19 years), the teenage girl with an interest in computer games most often identified with the author. In the other interest groups, the young people hardly ever identified with the author. When comparing the readers-players from a gender perspective, one can conclude that the women more often identified with the author than the men as indicated in Figures 3.9 and 3.10.



*Figure 3.9 The Relative Frequency of Women’s Identification*



*Figure 3.10 The Relative Frequency of Men’s Identification*

The identification with the author was typical for the women with an interest in literature and computer games, for the women with an interest only in computer games or only in literature and for those women who were interested neither in literature, nor in computer games. The reason why the female readers-players more often identified with the author than the male readers-players is possibly related to the differences how women and men perceive texts, their emotionality and experience.

The female readers-players motivated their choices from the author’s perspective in different ways. It was important for the woman with an interest in computer games and

literature to maintain tension in the text and not to resolve the conflict, whereas for the woman with an interest in computer games, it was essential that the choices were unusual – more precisely, different from those of the real life. Namely, this woman (she is an accountant) apparently perceived the interactive fiction text as a game, not as a direct or indirect representation of the reality. Also, her responses in the questionnaire confirmed it. She emphasized that the choices that included bright opposites generated emotions for her; besides that, she wanted a happier ending. In addition, interactive fiction encouraged her to read more, and she considered it as entertainment that she would like to continue. The female reader-player with a professional interest in literature (she teaches Latvian and Latvian literature) selected those choices that could lead to an escalation of the conflict in the text and increase the emotional effect. However, the responses of her questionnaire proved that her expectations were often not fulfilled and she was not able to find those options that could raise the literary quality of the interactive fiction text. Also, unlike other readers-players in her interest group who identified only with the character, the woman without an interest in computer games and literature chose two times the continuation of the story from the author's perspective. She described her motivations very briefly – namely, the specific choices could make the plot more interesting. Her responses in the questionnaire stated that, unlike other female readers-players, she had not felt like a co-author, had not experienced any emotions and had not looked for any deeper meaning in the interactive fiction text.

The only person who identified with the author in the youth group was the 17-year-old girl with an interest in computer games. She stated that she had felt as a co-author, but her motivations were rather homogenous ('it is more interesting that way') and similar to those of the woman without any interest in computer games and literature. In the author of the research's opinion, both readers-players' identification with the author is not related to their understanding about what makes the text more interesting, but rather to an attempt to find out whether an interactive fiction text can be more appealing than traditional fiction.

In the male group, the reader-player with an interest in literature most often identified with the author (the frequency rate was 9% lower than that of the woman in the same category). He felt as a co-author of the interactive fiction text, motivated his choices and modelled the whole text according to the character's nature. Namely, 'the human being is responsible for the choices he/she makes'. More precisely, in the reading process of the interactive fiction text, he made his choices so that the character could be perceived as a responsible person.

The man with an interest in both computer games and literature who teaches physics made nearly one third as many choices as the previously-mentioned male reader-player.

However, his motivations were different; they were more related to his reader experience and revealed the ideas mentioned in the literature review that men like to read expressive, action-based stories and they are interested not only in texts about men, but also in those where women are the leading characters.

In the youth group, the young man with an interest in both computer games and literature identified with the author twice, but the teenage boy with an interest in computer games – once. Their motivation behind the choices was the intention to make the text more interesting. Both of them stated that they could not predict the continuation of the interactive fiction text, but their feelings and emotions originated from the reading process differed. Namely, the male reader-player who identified with the author twice revealed that he did not feel as a co-author, but he would like to be one and wished to read an interactive fiction text where he could have a stronger influence.

The largest identification difference among the readers-players of different age is in the group of the readers-players with an interest in literature. The young people of this group have never identified with the author, whereas the readers-players of older generation have made 48.5% of choices on average from the author's perspective. The young people of this group stated that they could predict the continuation of the interactive fiction text and were satisfied with the provided choices. In the author of the research's opinion, the youth absolute identification with the character could be explained with the factors that they perceived the interactive fiction text more emotionally and they are comparatively less experienced readers than those of the older generation.

When comparing the readers-players' identification with the author and their feelings (the feelings were identified as the responses of the question 'Did you feel like a co-author of the text while reading it?' from the questionnaire), one can conclude that approximately the same amount of the readers-players as those who have identified with the author at least once (ten readers-players) have felt as co-authors (eleven readers-players) in the reading process. However, there seems to be a certain contradiction between the feelings and the action (identification) of nearly half of the readers-players. Namely, they felt like co-authors, but identified only with the character or did not feel like co-authors, but identified with the author. This contradiction was typical among young readers-players with an interest in literature or computer games and without it (see Table 3.10).

**Table 3.10 The results from the questionnaires of the readers-players without any interest in computer games and literature**

Gender	Age	Interests	Feeling like a Co-Author	Identification with the Author
Female	58	Literature	Yes	10
Male	47	Literature	Yes	8
Female	17	Computer games	Yes	5
Female	62	Computer games	Yes	4
Male	18	Computer games and literature	Yes	2
Female	18	Literature	Yes	0
Male	19	Literature	Yes	0
Female	18	-	Yes	0
Male	19	-	Yes	0
Female	36	Computer games and literature	Sometimes	6
Male	34	Computer games and literature	Sometimes	3
Female	55	-	No	2
Male	17	Computer games	No	1
Male	33	Computer games	No	1
Female	17	Computer games and literature	No	0
Male	59	-	No	0

Four readers-players stated that they had felt like co-authors; however, they had never identified with the author (they had not motivated their choices using text formation principles – a composition, characters, etc.). After studying their motivations and questionnaire responses, one can conclude that these young readers-players probably more directly perceived the task (namely, rather formally-imposed identification with the captain – the main character) at the beginning of the interactive fiction text and acted as the authors of memoirs where the leading character is the author who retells one’s own life events. Thus, at the level of feeling, the role of author merged with the one of the character.

At the same time, the readers with an interest in computer games most probably perceived the interactive fiction text as a game, not a text creation process; therefore, they did not feel like co-authors. Similarly, in the author of the research’s opinion, one can explain why the 55-year-old woman without any interest in computer games and literature did not feel as a co-author, but motivated two choices from the author’s perspective. Namely, she also perceived the interactive fiction work only as a game.

When comparing the responses from the questionnaire, nearly all readers-players confirmed that they had partly or completely understood the interactive fiction text. The teenage girls indicated that they had not understood the meaning of several words, whereas the older readers-players without any interest in computer games and literature were confused about the plot of the interactive fiction text and its characters. Besides that, the respondents interested in literature gave a more generalized main idea of the text. Furthermore, the young people evaluated the provided choices more often as interesting than the older readers-players. The readers-active-players were highly sceptical about the given choices. Besides that, the young stated more often than the older readers-players that they had experienced both positive and negative emotions in the reading process of the interactive fiction text. In addition, the young and, especially the women, indicated that they could predict the course of action in the text. Besides that, the most part of the readers-players did not like the end of the text, and, especially those interested in computer games, wanted to have a stronger influence on it. Furthermore, almost all readers-players were satisfied with the interface and functionality of the interactive fiction program.

As the main advantages of interactive fiction, it was mentioned the new reading experience and increased participation of the reader-player in the reading process. The disadvantage, according to the readers-players, was the need to use an electronic device when reading interactive fiction. The older readers-players highlighted that interactive fiction had not led to any emotional experience, nor had provided any new perspective on life.

In general, while the most part of the readers-players do not plan to read other interactive fiction texts because they do not like to read long text on the computer, the young men with different interests are mostly willing to read them.

## CONCLUSIONS

The author of the research has analysed sixteen readers-players' identification with the author or the character of the interactive fiction *His Majesty's Ship Impetuous* and their understanding and emotions originated in the reading process with the aim to argue about a synergic complexity of the link between the identification type of the reader-player in the reading process of interactive fiction and one's age, gender and interests related to literature and computer games. Prior to the start of the research, she proposed the following hypothesis: in the reading-playing process of interactive fiction, the reader-player's identification with a character or the author depends on the variables of one's age, gender and interests related to literature and computer games. After analysing the data, she has drawn the following conclusions.

1. In the secondary sources, the term *interactive fiction* has various definitions; however, it is mostly a computer software programme with game elements and interactivity.
2. Interactive fiction is a comparatively new phenomenon that was established approximately forty years ago; therefore, it is a relatively little studied subject.
3. Interactive fiction is considered new media.
4. The case study as the primary research method applied in the study has been proved to be effective in the investigation of the reader-player of interactive fiction.
5. An appropriate interactive fiction work to study the reader-player has the following qualities: it is understandable for the reader-player; it does not require a lot of time to read-play; the reader-player has suitable computer skills to read-play the text.
6. According to the participants of the research, the main advantages of interactive fiction are a new reading experience and an increased participation of a reader-player in the reading process, and the main disadvantages of interactive fiction are the need to use an electronic device when reading interactive fiction and a lack of emotional experience and new perspective on life.
7. The young readers-players have expressed a higher interest in reading interactive fiction.
8. The older readers-players are more critical of interactive fiction and have found more disadvantages.
9. The young readers-players, especially men, plan to read other interactive fiction texts, whereas the older readers-players do not plan to do that.
10. The readers-players have more often identified with the character of the interactive fiction text.

11. The largest quantitative difference in relation to the identification with the character can be recognized not among the readers-players of different gender, but among those of different age, especially among the female readers-players of different age.
12. The older woman with an interest in literature has mostly identified with the author of the interactive fiction text.
13. In order to create an interesting interactive fiction text, one has to take into account, firstly, the reader-player's competence in literature and computer games and then also their gender and age.

The author concludes that the goal of the research has been reached, and the hypothesis has been partly approved. The results of the research suggest that interactive fiction constructed according to the reader-player's personality can be applied to encourage reading, especially among young people. The strengths of the present research are the analysis and the interpretation of the data collected from the readers-players, whereas its weakness is the subjective nature of the collected data: their dependence on external circumstances, the reader-player's mood and the abilities to evaluate oneself objectively and to describe the motivations behind one's choices. The present research is possible to expand by studying how readers-players perceive other types of interactive fiction.

## THESES

1. The theme of the research is the reader-player of interactive fiction.
2. The purpose of the research is to argue about a synergic complexity of the link between the identification type of the reader-player in the reading process of interactive fiction and one's age, gender and interests related to literature and computer games.
3. The main research method is a case study that included a questionnaire.
4. The research object is the reader-player of interactive fiction.
5. Interactive fiction is mostly a computer software programme with game elements and interactivity.
6. Interactive fiction is a comparatively new phenomenon; therefore, it is a relatively little studied subject.
7. According to the participants of the research, the main advantages of interactive fiction are a new reading experience and an increased participation of a reader-player in the reading process, and the main disadvantages of interactive fiction are the need to use an electronic device when reading interactive fiction and a lack of emotional experience and new perspective on life.
8. The young readers-players express a higher interest in reading interactive fiction.
9. The older readers-players are more critical of interactive fiction and find more disadvantages.
10. The young readers-players, especially the men, plan to read other interactive fiction texts, whereas the older readers-players do not plan to do that.
11. The readers-players more often identify with a character of the interactive fiction text.
12. The largest quantitative difference in relation to the identification with the character can be recognized not among the readers-players of different gender, but among those of different age, especially among the female readers-players of different age.
13. The older woman with an interest in literature mostly identifies with the author of the interactive fiction text.
14. In order to create an interesting interactive fiction text, one has to take into account, firstly, the reader-player's competence in literature and computer games and then also their gender and age.

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# Appendix 1

## Questionnaire

The questionnaire is designed to find out your opinion and understanding of the work and interactive fiction in general. It is anonymous and will take not more than 10 minutes. Please circle the appropriate answer and/or write comments if applicable.

Information about you:

Age: \_\_\_\_\_ years

Gender: • Female      • Male

Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Computer skills: • Proficient      • Average      • Beginner

Interest in fiction: • Professional      • Hobby      • I seldom read      • I never read

Interest in computer games: • I often play      • I sometimes play      • I never play

1. Did you understand the plot of the story?

• Yes

• No      Reasons: \_\_\_\_\_

• Partly      Reasons: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Give the main ideas of the text!

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Was the course of action in the text predictable?

• Yes

• No

• In some cases, it was predictable. In which cases was it predictable?

\_\_\_\_\_

4. What do you think about the provided choices in the text?

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Which of your choices caused emotional experience (positive or negative emotions) for you?

\_\_\_\_\_

6. What is your opinion regarding the end of the text?

\_\_\_\_\_

7. Did you feel like a co-author of the text while reading it?

• Yes

• Sometimes      When? \_\_\_\_\_

• No

8. Was the interface of the text user-friendly?

• Yes

• No

• Other \_\_\_\_\_

9. Was the functionality of the program satisfactory?

- Yes
- No
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

10. Was it your first time reading interactive fiction?

- Yes
- No

11. What is your opinion regarding interactive fiction (in comparison to traditional fiction)?

- Positive aspects:

\_\_\_\_\_

- Negative aspects:

\_\_\_\_\_

12. Do you plan to read other interactive fiction texts?

- Yes
- No

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you!

## Appendix 2

### Attestation Page Dokumentārā lapa

Bakalaura darbs „The Analysis Of the Reader-Player Categories In Interactive Fiction” („Interaktīvās prozas lasītāju-spēlētāju kategoriju analīze”) izstrādāts LU Humanitāro zinātņu fakultātē.

Ar savu parakstu apliecinu, ka pētījums veikts patstāvīgi, izmantoti tikai tajā norādītie informācijas avoti un iesniegtā darba elektroniskā kopija atbilst izdrukai.

Autore: Rasa Rozīte

23. 05. 2016.

Rekomendēju darbu aizstāvēšanai

Vadītāja: profesore Irina Novikova

25. 05. 2016.

Recenzents:

Studiju metodiķe: Sintija Zankovska

25. 05. 2016.

Darbs iesniegts Anglistikas/Literatūras un kultūras katedrā 25. 05. 2016.

Darbu pieņēma:

Darbs aizstāvēts bakalaura gala pārbaudījuma komisijas sēdē

2016. gada..... jūnijā, prot. Nr. ...., vērtējums .....

Komisijas sekretāre: