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Esports Tournament Platform FACEIT Is Using AI To Try To Rid Gaming Of Toxic Message



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FACEIT is pushing toxicity into the past with AI. GETTY

The competitive gaming and esports world is growing at a rapid pace, with big teams being worth millions of dollars, but when it comes to the people actually playing the games, there are still a number of significant issues, and arguably the biggest is toxicity. But an AI innovation from FACEIT might finally have the solution to one of the biggest problems in esports.

Anyone who has played any of the major esports online can tell you of toxicity from other players, with abuse being hurled at anyone seen to be different, not pulling their weight or even for no reason at all. Many players stop playing online games as a result, while others say it can ruin the experience for them.

However, last year, online tournament platform FACEIT released the Minerva AI onto its platform, which could read and analyze messages sent in-game and take action against those deemed to be toxic. Since launch the AI has analysed more than 1.4bn chat messages, detected more than 1.9 million toxic messages and issued warnings, and also has banned over 100k players from the FACEIT platform.

But perhaps the more positive figures overall are that since launch 21% fewer toxic messages have been sent on FACEIT with a 62% reduction in seriously offensive messages being sent. It seems, at least according to FACEIT's numbers, that the AI moderator is working.

But so far Minerva has only been watching text messages, and voice chat was still rife with abusive and offensive comments and general annoyances. But now the AI has been updated and is able to analyse audio sources of data and detect two different types of potential abuse: toxic verbal messages and microphone spamming. Audio of the entire match will be analyzed to avoid missing key context in potentially offensive chat, which is done by using CNN (Convolutional Neural Network) technology.

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“Just one toxic player in a match can impact the experience of so many others; that's why we knew we needed to find a solution to moderation in

games at scale,” said Maria Laura Scuri, the Director of Business Intelligence at FACEIT. “In traditional, offline sport, there's a referee in every competitive game - but we simply can't achieve that same human approach online when we have hundreds of thousands of concurrent players. This is something we find personally frustrating as gamers ourselves, but we also knew that toxicity was a key driver of cancellations for our FACEIT Premium offering; and was the cause of almost 40% of our detractors. In response, we decided to launch Minerva - our AI-powered admin and moderator. Using Machine Learning techniques Minerva is constantly learning, and can dynamically spot bad behaviour and take action immediately. We initially tackled text chat, but we've just expanded her capabilities to cover voice chat in every spoken language.”

The AI platform Minerva is certainly a welcome addition to the FACEIT platform, and further pushes the company ahead as the market leader in the space. However, some players may be worried about having all of their voice chat monitored while playing. Obviously, the net result is positive, but it will be interesting to see how the community reacts to this new observation tool.

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