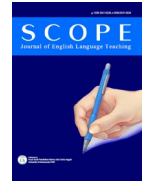




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Research Article

Criticizing the Discourse of Colonialism in Africa through Metal Gear Solid V

Muhammad Hafiz Kurniawan^{1*}, Dadang Sudana², Wawan Gunawan³

^{1,2,3} Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Jalan Dr. Setiabudi, Isola, Bandung, West Java and Postal Code, Indonesia

KEYWORDS

Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis
 Social Semiotic Approach
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 Colonialism in Africa

A B S T R A C T

Taking the setting in Africa, two missions in Metal Gear Solid V: The Phantom Pain entitled 'The White Mamba' and 'Blood Runs Deep' has an antagonist character named Eli who is described as white child laboring more than ten African Children as his soldiers. This boy, depicted with an arrogant pose, always tries to challenge the main character who is predicted to be this boy's father. This paper aims to analyze the language and image strategies in representing Eli and African Child soldiers by using Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis with social semiotics approach to video game. The method of collecting the data of this research is using recorded video game and the transcription of conversation about Eli and Child Soldiers in video game cutscene, gameplay, and dialogues in cassette tape in video game. The data of this research are the verbal and non-verbal semiotic sources. Verbal semiotic sources are in form of sentences and phrases, while non-verbal semiotic sources are in form of screen captures of gameplay and stories of the video game. This research found that the verbal strategies in criticizing social actor representing the colonialism are by using label in specification and objectivation, while in visual strategies, the camera vertical angle can show the support of video game developer to oppressed and colonized people and the criticism to oppressor and colonizer.

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR(S):

E-mail: mh.kurniawan@upi.edu

INTRODUCTION

Discrimination still happens today in many sectors with several factors. One of the form of discriminations is racial discrimination which can be received by the minority group either individually or institutionally. As mentioned in the research conducted by Marshburn et al. (2022) that the denials of White to the racial discrimination to Black is just their strategy to uphold their belief to maintain the social dominance. The feeling of being dominant towards other races is also in form of White Supremacy.

White supremacy and racism have risen in these recent years with different themes and motives which are covertly practiced in daily basis (Bowser, 2017) and various institutional settings (Prager, 2017) and even it seems mundane (Liu & Pechenkina, 2016). This practice is in various elements such as in migration policy (Armenta, 2016; Golash-Boza et al., 2019; Smith, 2019), religion issue and migration (Denike, 2015; Hopkins, 2016) national security policy (Denike, 2015), and educational setting (Blaisdell, 2016; Duncan, 2019; Liu & Pechenkina, 2016; Myers & Bhopal, 2017). All these issues are wrapped into what is called scapegoat racism to rebuild the racial order where 'White' is powerful (Denike,

2015) and this practice seems to be constituted in educational setting when the people of color were treated differently such as protecting white student when they do racist-name-calling and bullying (Myers & Bhopal, 2017) separating class, curriculum and access to particular learning media (Blaisdell, 2016) making a joke with Chinese look (Liu & Pechenkina, 2016), and treating dissimilarly towards Black teachers at school (Duncan, 2019).

The racism and White Supremacy practice happened to educational settings is really ironic. However, structural racism views that school, where the subjects should be shared equally and the knowledge about living in equality should be taught, is in fact affected by the practice of racism outside the school (Blaisdell, 2016) and the past events such as colonization era and African slavery (Golash-Boza, 2016; Prager, 2017). This is indirectly becoming the global mind when it comes to the race separation using particular words such as white, black, Asian, and Native American (Golash-Boza, 2016) and this name calling indicated as racist can be in various words and phrases. One of those are 'exotic' referring to people of color (Liu & Pechenkina, 2016) 'fragile' standing for student of color who cannot achieve the required grade (Blaisdell, 2016), 'brown boy' for labeling non-white students (Myers & Bhopal, 2017) 'thug' to refer to Black male who reject or cannot fulfill White America's standard (Smiley & Fakunle, 2016) and other uses of words and phrases with negative connotations such as 'Athlete', 'Rapist', 'Sidekick' for African American men and 'Mammy', 'Bitch', 'Welfare queen', 'Video ho' for African American women (Golash-Boza, 2016).

This problem, then, might be taken into consideration to make a video game story by Hideo Kojima because the word White, in one of the missions in Metal Gear Solid V: The Phantom Pain video game, is not collocated with positive word and even with positive connotation. The word White to refer to the antagonist character named 'Eli' is combined with word 'Mamba' which is commonly combined with the word 'Black' as the most feared snake in Africa (B. Branch & Branch, 2001; W. R. Branch et al., 2014). This name was taken probably because the setting of the video game story is in Angola in 1984 (Ashcraft, 2015), where the distribution of Black Mamba or *Dendroaspis polylepis* was recorded (W. R. Branch et al., 2014).

The history of Angola in 1984 which portrayed the effort of decolonizing movement was taken as Hideo Kojima's last Metal Gear Series because the Angola's civil war which began in late 1970's between UNITA (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola) and MPLA (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola) (Weigert, 2011) was the product of colonialism (Green,

2017), the root of White Supremacy (Golash-Boza, 2016) and the Cold War between two opposite ideological basis US and USSR which supported UNITA and MPLA (Pearce, 2020). The previous studies about this video game did not discuss the civil war in Africa which relates to White Supremacy and African Children as Eli's sidekicks. Although it mentioned the historical relation of civil war in Angola as the video game setting and white colonizer interest (Green, 2017), the discussion of this research mostly about the criticism towards the historical trauma of post-9/11 and Guantanamo Camp in Cuba (p.28) which cannot be easily cured because it relates to Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (p.36) and the army and victims of war really were living with the real phantom pain as the title represent (p.54).

The second research is rather similar to Green's historical perspective but it views the video game landscape which gives the environmental detail, the use of items and weapons, and alternatives of winning the game in virtual war game but eliminating unimportant aspects such as civilians as non-combatant in the area of war (Murray, 2018), and implies American's imagination of Afghanistan as one of this video game settings that need to be intervened because of its relation to communist colonialism, USSR, and Al-Qaeda in post 9/11 (p. 194-5). The third research took different perspective from two aforementioned studies, because this research elaborate on how antagonist character of this video game named Skull Face uses English as a weapon, in literal sense, to kill everyone who speaks it (Hall, 2018) because English is seen by this super villain as the product of colonialism (p.87) and in fact it has endangered many minority and indigenous languages as a criticism to English as lingua franca (p.85). While those three researches relates the video game to the ideology, and historical perspective of the video game (Green, 2017; Hall, 2018; Murray, 2018) another research in regard to this video game were discussing how woman called Quiet is portrayed in the video game (Gandolfi & Sciannamblo, 2018) and she becomes the fetish object to the male gazer (p. 8) and she is seen as the object of visual fantasies rather than her actions in the missions (p. 11).

By viewing this historical background, the story of the video game and the ideological perspective is possibly imbued in the video game (Bogost, 2010; Frasca, 2003) and this research aims to analyze the visual and lexical choices as the strategy to criticize the colonialism discourse in Africa (Machin & Mayr, 2012) which is employed by Hideo Kojima to spread his ideology in questioning US dominance (Parkin, 2014) and criticizing White Supremacy symbolized by the second enemy of the chapter two of this video game named Eli (Kojima, 2015). Another reason why this video game is important to scrutinize is that Hideo Kojima is a video game director

which realizes to what have been happening to the world. This is proven that his criticism is continuing in his new game entitled 'Death Stranding' inspired by British exit (Brexit) and Donald Trump (Griffin, 2019). Moreover, video games directed by Hideo Kojima are known to have narrative elements in the cutscene because of its cinema mimic (Higgins, 2009) and also could bring the director's message – in case of Dead Rising video game which has similar structure to Metal Gear Series in using cutscene to relay message (Schott, 2010)– which make the players can enjoy both gameplay and story.

The narrative and ludos (gameplay) elements in video game are called cybertext because its narrative elements make players engaged to it (Humphrey, 2012) and of its interactivity force the reader to be fully interacted to change the flow of the text rather than only being strongly engaged without any power to act towards the story. This aspect is later called Ergodic literature (Aarseth, 2012), this research uses social-semiotics approach to video games proposed by Pérez-Latorre et al. (2016) to analyze ludonarrative dimensions of the video games, especially how meaning were built in the gameplay and Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis proposed by Machin & Mayr (2012) to deepen the analysis on narrative dimensions which appears in cutscene of the video game as a part of providing background and motivation (Ensslin, 2015) to the cybertext reader/video game player.

METHOD

This article follows the way of conducting research on multimodal approach, in terms of collecting the data from video game and recorded plays and analyzing the narrative elements which is available in cutscene. The multimodal approach uses 4 steps in collecting the data namely (1) collecting and logging data, (2) viewing data, (3) sampling data, and (4) transcribing and analyzing data (Bezemer & Jewitt, 2010). Because the data of this research is video game, the need of video recording is inevitable because by it can be used for repetitive viewing (p. 186). Therefore, the first step of this approach is the data were collected from both the video game downloaded in Steam and the recorded plays which are available in YouTube. The second step is the data were viewed carefully and repetitively in order to obtain the intended visual and lexical aspects in the video game which refers to the White Supremacy criticism. The third step is the most representative data were taken to be the samples which can be further explained using social-semiotics approach of the video game in Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) proposed by Machin & May (2012) After that, the data were transcribed so that the type of social actor representation strategies in form of language and image.

This research uses one ground theory of Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (Machin & Mayr, 2012). The use of term multimodal was derived from the theory of Halliday (1978) which developed the term of context of situation or register. In this register, it is divided into three area, field which realizes action and experience, tenor which is related to the relationship between speaker and hearer and mode which is closely connected to communication medium (Martin & Rose, 2008). Therefore, Martin stated that multimodal theory was based on the work of Systemic Functional Linguistics (Martin, 2016). So that, in this analysis especially in the analysis of language representation strategies, the work of Halliday and Martin were applied to attain deeper understanding in the data. In the part of visual strategies in representing the social actors the work of (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021) was applied to obtain more detail explanation of representing the social actors.

Social actors' (later abbreviated as SA) representation can be divided into two strategies: language and image strategies. In case of language strategies there are at least ten (10) categories and in visual they are six (6) categorizations. In language strategies, social actor (or SA) can be 1) pronoun which refers to SA as personal pronoun, 2) collective which means representing SA as a group, 3) personal which represent SA as his/her name, 4) objectivation where SA is represented with their feature, 5) specification which refers to specific individual, 6) functionalization which signifies the job or roles they do, 7) suppression of which the agency or SA is implied or deleted, 8) generic when SA is represented as generic term, 9) anonymous when the specific SA is not mentioned or only mentioned as the group of society or community, and 10) aggregation which shows the SA as statistics.

In visual communication strategies those six (6) categories which can be in form 1) distance which represent the SA in relation between camera and the SA close, medium, or long shot, 2) angle which means that the SA can be represented as equal (eye-to-eye angle), representing power (lower angle), or viewer power (high angle) (Caple, 2013; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021), 3) individualization where SA is represented as he/she is alone with specific feature or 4) collectivization which make the SA is represented as a group of people, and 5) generic representation which give an SA general attributes as the part of a society or 6) specific representation which make SA have specific attributive of SA's physical features (Machin & Mayr, 2012)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The result of this research shows the social actors focused on this research: African Child Soldiers and White Mamba have different representation. Child soldiers are the

representation of African people in the mission rescuing African Child Soldiers and White Mamba are the representation of the colonizer in Africa. In Child soldiers' representation, they are depicted as collective rather than personal which has different percentage with White Mamba. White Mamba is represented more in personal noun 15.2% by using the name "Eli" while the child soldiers only 0.85% and the use of this personal noun or the name is when two of child soldier was dead of accident. The rest of it, they are represented as collective by 25.6% by using phrase "the kids, those kids, the other kids, escaped children, and his men" while White Mamba as the commander of child soldiers is only 1% from 164 data analysed. Pronoun, especially, in White Mamba appears more frequently than in Child soldiers as in White Mamba it reaches 60.4% and Child Soldiers only 42.7%.

Table 1 First results on analysis of language strategies in representing social actors.

No.	Representation of social actors in language	Child Soldiers (in %)	White Mamba (in %)
1.	Pronoun	42.7	60.4
2.	collective	25.6	1
3.	personal	0.85	15.2
4.	objectivation	2.56	7
5.	specificication	0	4
6.	functionalization	2.56	4.26
7.	Suppression	11.1	9.7
8.	Generic	7.7	3.0
9.	Anonymous	4.3	0
10.	Aggregation	2.5	0
Sum		100	100
Total Data/Corpus		117 data	164 data

Source of data Metal Gear Solid V: The Phantom Pain (Kojima, 2015)

The use of pronoun between the child soldiers and White Mamba also different. The use of personal pronoun indicating other roles "he" for one entity is commonly used for White Mamba rather than Child Soldiers. The use of personal pronoun for other roles "they" indicating groups of people (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) are more frequent in the case of Child Soldiers showing that they belong to a group. Unlike White Mamba, Child Soldiers are commonly represented as a single group of children who are under the order of "their commander" because this phrase is also used to refer to White Mamba as the "unit commander".

Besides both of them are represented as an object or objectivation (Machin & Mayr, 2012). The objectivation is the use another term to signify the feature of White Mamba. The phrase "White Mamba" per se is the objectivation to give the video game players that he is poisonous because the synonymous word of poisonous is also mentioned in the script of cassette which are the data of this research. In the conversation between two characters who states that White Mamba "has an attitude problem from the day one" and "his attitude is contagious". Because of this contiguity of his attitude, the child soldiers labelled as "a disaster". Child soldiers are also represented as an amateur which can do anything without the help of the adults so in objectivation, the child soldiers are represented as fish out of water. These objectivation can also be included into metaphorical expression, or structural metaphor (Kovecses, 2010) which compares two different domain: poisonous snake is human for the objectivation "white mamba" and natural phenomena is human's attitude for the objectivation "disaster" in Child Soldiers.

The other realization is specification. In this strategies, White Mamba seems to be represented specifically compared to the Child Soldiers. The phrase or nominal groups which are used to represent White Mamba are close to the depiction of Caucasian people. These nominal group consist of determiner, adjective, and noun for the word class and deictic, epithet and thing for the functional elements (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014)

Data	The	only light-skinned	kid
	The	blonde	hair
	The	blue	eyes
	That		brat
Functional element	Deictic	Epithet	Thing
Word Class	Determiner	Adjective	Noun

Figure 1. The realization of specification of White Mamba adapted from (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014)

The figure 1 above shows that White Mamba is the representation of colonizer in Africa which has the physical appearance mentioned above and with the derogatory sense in term of his attitude by using the word "brat" which means that he is very annoying and has bad behaviour. For Child Soldiers representation, there is none of these specification appears to represent them physically.

Moreover, in functionalization, White Mamba is represented to be the leader of the Child Soldiers. The nominal group used for this realization is "commander" and "leader" which means that he is the one who lead and command the Child Soldier. Meanwhile, the child Soldiers are represented as "escapees" and "war fighters". These

functionalization give an image that child soldiers are the group that tries to escape from the Mother Base, in this context and what they are doing is caused by White Mamba as the leader and the commander of Child Soldiers.

The result of the analysis also shows that the child soldiers are represented in suppression which means that the agency is deleted or implied. In the case of Child Soldiers, the suppression is in the context of making the weapons. The social actors are implied from the previous sentence. The sentence is in receptive form without any agency such as “the weapons we found were handmade”, “blades ground out of knives and forks, couple of bow guns built out of scrap, and explosives made using detergent”, “And get this – the explosive were tightly packed with nails”. The verbal group consist of finite verb ‘were’ in the sentence and non-finite verb ‘ground out’, ‘built’ and ‘made’ (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

This agency deletion also exists in the representation of White Mamba as social actors such as “having one hell of an attitude for his age”, ‘learning the truth about himself’, “cursing the fact that he’s a clone”, “bearing a grudge against selfish adults” and “coming to hate who he was cloned from”. However, the suppression of White Mamba is not fully suppressed as what happened to Child Soldiers. In White Mamba case, the suppression still shows the actor but the position is not in the subject but in the clause complex or in prepositional phrase as post nominal group (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). The striking difference also lays on the use of non-finite verb. In the case of Child Soldiers, past form while in White Mamba it is in present form (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). The difference of using present and past can possess the meaning that White Mamba is more active than the Child Soldiers in doing bad things in Mother Base.

White Mamba and Child Soldiers are also represented in generic representation. White Mamba is represented as a kid, a soldier, and a clone which is the part of suspicion of White Mamba as the clone of the main character in video game, called Snake. In the other hand, Child Soldiers are represented as kid or kids. These make both of them can be the same in terms of ‘kid(s)’. This representation make them seemingly innocent and everything they do can be tolerated because they are still a kid. In other categorization, Child Soldiers are represented in anonymous and aggregation such as the use of deictic ‘some of’ and ‘a lot of’ to make the evidence clear that they are many and they are the victims. Meanwhile, White Mamba is not represented as anonymous and aggregation.

The next representation is in form of visual communication strategies. In this research, the representation of image strategies differ from one character to another. The difference lays on individualization and specific, and collectivization and generic. In Child Soldiers, the

collectivization and generic is more dominant than individualization and specific. In White Mamba, it is the opposite. This dominant realization in image in collectivization and individualization is in tune with the language strategies. This shows that Child Soldiers are represented in collective or group rather than individual. Meanwhile, in White Mamba, he is represented as specific individual to show that he is the most significant figure in driving the story. Almost all elements in social actors’ visual representation strategies shows the similar number of percentage between the White Mamba and Child Soldiers. This can be interpreted that the game developer would like to shape the equal perception of video game players about White Mamba and Child Soldiers. In other words, the game developer would show that they, the colonizer and colonized as what represented by White Mamba and Child soldiers respectively, should be seen as equal in their position.

Table 2 Second results on analysis of image strategies in representing social actors.

No.	Representation of social actors in Image		Social Actors	
	elements	realization	Child Soldiers	White Mamba
distance		long	16.7	14.7
		medium	48.3	45
		close	35	40.2
vertical angle		equal	60	50.5
		viewer power	35	13.2
		representation power	5	36.3
horizontal angle		detachment	88.3	87.3
		involvement	11.6	12.7
group or individual framing		individualization & specific	53.3	92.6
		collectivization & generic	46.7	7.4
Sum			100%	100%
Total Data/Corpus			60	204

Source of data Metal Gear Solid V: The Phantom Pain (Kojima, 2015)

The data result on table 2 also shows that White Mamba wants to gain more power as the representation of colonizer in front of the colonized people. It is shown that representation power in White Mamba in the case of vertical angle (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021) position in number two after equal or eye level angle. In the other hand, the representation of Child Soldiers is viewer power or the high angle to represent that they lack in power (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021). However, as the story goes, the representation of both social actors are made the same

because the equal representation is more dominant for both social actors.



Figure 2. The representation of collectivization & generic in Child Soldiers as the representation of colonized people

Figure 2 shows the example of child soldiers represented in collectivization & generic for they are shown as a group of African children as another African children without any specific or distinctive features (Machin & Mayr, 2012). The figure 2 also can be interpreted that the colonized people are principally behind the bars though their land is full of resources. In the story, these African Child Soldiers in figure 2 hold the diamond as an exchange for their freedom and life since they are the target of assassination from their own people. The representation of White Mamba however is different. In the *cutscene* or short film during the gameplay shows that he is the snobbish white child who has overconfident attitude in every situation.



Figure 3. The representation of individualization & specific in Child Soldiers as the representation of colonizer

Figure 3 shows that White Mamba, as the name represent the appearance, wants to be respected and acknowledged. Figure 3 is the example of the 74 shot of 204 that shows the thirst of power acknowledgement in White Mamba. The thirst of power acknowledgment term comes from the interpreting the story which White Mamba was defeated when he fight against the main character, Snake who is represented as the adult Caucasian. Although Snake is Caucasian, his mission is to rescue the Child Soldiers and to defeat the White Mamba so that the Child Soldiers can have what they deserve such as education and basic job training. These interpretations took the evidence from

language evidence which is available in the video game story as it is shown in table 3.

Table 3. The basis of interpretation of visual representation strategies in representing social actors.

Social Actors	Excerpt from the story
White Mamba	Snake : So English is his mother tongue. Miller : He could be from the east or the south, or maybe even further north or south. English is well-established in countries all across the continent. It's rooted in Africa like a weed ... or maybe "parasite" is the better word
Child Soldiers	Miller : You probably noticed on the way in, we've expanded housing. They'll have their own quarters separate from ours. Won't be counted as staff Snake : So what, we're running daycare now?" Miller : They'll learn how to read and write, do basic jobs. A chance at real life Just not from behind a gun. Being behind a gun's what we do, boss. There's no room for angles in our heaven.

Source of data Metal Gear Solid V:

The Phantom Pain (Kojima, 2015)

Therefore, instead of labelling the child soldiers as black or another term contained racist word as the findings from (Golash-Boza, 2016), in this video game, African Child Soldiers are labelled as angels as shown in figure 3. Child Soldiers are also prepared for basic training such as doing basic jobs and learning how to read and write. This evidence shows that this video game criticized the fact that colonizers only saw Africa as merely the source of richness in term of its natural resource but they never cared about the people who inhabited the continent. Moreover, this video games also criticized the colonizer by telling that "English is parasite in Africa continent" it means that this video game promote the suppressed people like the representation of Child Soldiers and demote the White Supremacy ideology from the colonizer, but this video game uses the Caucasian characters to criticize their own kind.

This findings show that the discourse strategy applied in the video game both in verbal and non-verbal semiotic sources can be used not to degrade the position of Black

compared to White but to protect the Black who is represented as the victims of White's influence to commit the crime in the context of the story. These Child Soldiers representing the Angolan are positioned as the 'sidekick' of Eli who was represented as White. This term, 'sidekick', which Golash-Boza et al. (2019) regarded as a part of downgrading the Black, in this video game is used to defend them towards the crime that White did as the warmonger.

CONCLUSION

From the result of the analysis as explained in findings and discussion part, this research can conclude that the verbal strategies in criticizing colonialism in Africa is by giving negative labelling to the colonizer by giving the name "White Mamba" as the most poisonous snake found in Africa. The use of this label is to show that the problematic attitude of this White Caucasian boy is contagious and he is dangerous. He is specifically described as blonde hair and blue eyes boy with annoying behavior. Furthermore, English as the representation of colonizer language in Africa is labeled as parasite too. In the other hand, Child Soldiers as the representation of colonized people is described as angels and they deserve a chance of real life by training them to read, write and do basic jobs.

In visual strategies, this video game wants to equalize the Child Soldiers as the representation of colonized people and White Mamba as the representation of colonizer though in the beginning of the story each of them is shown differently. Child Soldiers are represented as having lack of power but in the process of the story they are represented as equal by taking them into camera framing with eye-level angle. White Mamba in early story is represented as powerful because he is taken into camera frame with low level angle but in the process of the story he is represented as equal as what happened to Child Soldiers.

From that result it is concluded that both visual and verbal strategies play the important role in representing the social actors. The label and attribute to social actors is the important element in verbal strategy, and camera angle is the meaningful element to show the social actor is being treated as equal or unequal. However, the other aspects such as story and gameplay elements in video game also can support the claim but this analysis only take the consideration of verbal and visual strategies in showing the criticism of the game developer towards colonialism in Africa.

The findings of this research also show that the seemingly downgrading representation of the social actor can be one of the strategies to protect the discriminated social actor. Therefore the analysis of Cutsce and story should be complemented with the analysis of gameplay because this element is also important to consider the context built in

the video game. For further research related to discourse of racial discrimination, the representation of Black should be compared to the White representation so that the more comprehensive discourse strategies can be achieved and the meaning of seemingly negative and downgrading representation may have another purpose.

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