Narrative Assets In Video Games As Linguistic's Research

Rahmaditya Khadifa Abdul Rozzaq Wijaya[1*], Evi Murti Wardhani[2], Misbah Faturrahman Bataiv[3], Ahnaf Dzaky Kamaluddin[4]
Universitas Duta Bangsa Surakarta[1,2,3,4]
*Correspondence Email : **rahmaditya_khadifa@udb.ac.id***

ABSTRACT	*Video games are a type of digital entertainment that has shown substantial growth in both complexity and cultural significance since its creation in the mid-20th century. This study use a qualitative methodology, specifically the content analysis technique, to investigate and examine narrative elements in video games as a subject of linguistic inquiry. This approach aligns with Klaus Krippendorff's theory presented in Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology (2004). Krippendorff's theory posits that content analysis enables researchers to interpret the significance of different forms of texts and media portrayals, such as dialogue and narration in video games. This research reveals that narrative assets in video games can be analyzed through various linguistic approaches, including pragmatics, sociolinguistics, and Appraisal System, to better understand how language in digital narratives creates complex experiences for players*
KEYWORDS	Narrative Assets; Video Games; Linguistics; Pragmatics; Sociolinguistics; Appraisal System
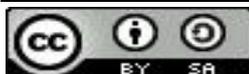
INTRODUCTION

Video games are a type of digital entertainment that has shown substantial growth in both complexity and cultural significance since its creation in the mid-20th century. Originally conceived as rudimentary entertainment software featuring elementary graphics and restricted user engagement, video games have progressed into intricate storylines, interactive virtual realms, and captivating immersive encounters. As stated in The Video Game Theory Reader edited by Mark J.P. Wolf and Bernard Perron (2003), early video games were frequently characterized by their simplicity and emphasis on arcade-style gameplay mechanics. However, technical improvements have permitted the construction of elaborate virtual worlds where players engage in a wide range of activities, from solving puzzles to engaging in battle and exploring open regions. This change signifies the increasing significance of video games as a platform for both amusement and artistic manifestation.

.

Interactivity is a key characteristic of video games. Video games differ from traditional media like films or novels by placing the player in a central role, enabling them to directly impact the storyline, characters, and setting. In his book "Half-Real: Video Games between Real Rules and Fictional Worlds" (2005), Jesper Juul highlights the significance of interactivity in video games. He argues that the act of making decisions in games has a direct influence on the progression of the game, resulting in a dynamic kind of narrative. This player agency creates a unique narrative structure where numerous outcomes and pathways are possible. Games that utilize branching narratives, like Mass Effect and Detroit: Become Human, showcase how interactivity modifies the conventional linear tale, prompting designers to contemplate different scenarios while upholding narrative coherence and player involvement.

The function of narrative in video games has also transformed, transitioning from basic storylines intended to enhance gaming to complex, multi-faceted narratives that can compete with those found in literature and movies. In his influential essay "Game Design as Narrative Architecture" found in The Game Design Reader: A Rules of Play Anthology (2006), Henry Jenkins contends that contemporary video games seamlessly incorporate narrative elements into the game world, resulting in stories that are intricately connected to the mechanics of gameplay. Games like The Last of Us and The Witcher series are famous for their character-driven tales and thematic depth, where moral challenges and player decisions play a big role. The marriage of storytelling with interactive gaming produces an immersive experience where players are not simply consumers but co-authors of the tale.

Moreover, video games are becoming acknowledged as cultural texts that reflect and deal with contemporary societal issues. In Video Games and Culture edited by Daniel Muriel and Garry Crawford (2018), the writers analyze how video games serve as venues for studying identity, ethics, power relations, and social norms. Through their tales, games often present players with ethical choices, confront them with societal issues, and mirror broader cultural trends. The dialogues, character interactions, and plot structures within games are not only functional; they are filled with cultural meanings that may be examined through numerous academic viewpoints. As a kind of digital media, video games are more than just entertainment—they are cultural artefacts that provide insight into the values, conflicts, and ideologies of the civilizations that generate and consume them.

The role of narrative in video games has also developed, ranging from simple narratives designed to promote gameplay to rich, multi-layered stories that can rival those found in literature and cinema. Henry Jenkins, in his influential essay "Game Design as Narrative Architecture" found in The Game Design Reader: A Rules of Play Anthology (2006), argues that modern video games integrate narrative elements seamlessly into the game world, creating stories that are deeply intertwined with gameplay mechanics. These narrative elements, or narrative assets, comprise the dialogue scripts, environmental storytelling, and character arcs that push the game's plot along. In narrative-driven games such as The Last of Us and The Witcher series, these materials are deliberately developed to provide depth and emotional resonance, ensuring that players are engaged not just by the gameplay but by the unfolding story and character relationships. The integration of these narrative assets with gameplay produces an immersive experience where players actively engage in molding the story through their interactions with the game world.

From a linguistics standpoint, these narrative elements are more than just tools for storytelling—they are rich sources of linguistic data. The dialogues, character interactions, and narrative structures can be evaluated using several language frameworks, such as discourse analysis, pragmatics, and systemic functional linguistics (SFL). By investigating how language is used to convey meaning, develop relationships, and construct identities inside these digital tales, academics can get insights into the broader patterns of

communication, cultural representation, and identity creation within digital environments. The integration of narrative assets with gameplay thus produces a unique linguistic environment where both scripted and interactive forms of discourse are open to examination as subjects of linguistic research.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study use a qualitative methodology, specifically the content analysis technique, to investigate and examine narrative elements in video games as a subject of linguistic inquiry. This approach aligns with Klaus Krippendorff's theory presented in Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology (2004). Krippendorff's theory posits that content analysis enables researchers to interpret the significance of different forms of texts and media portrayals, such as dialogue and narration in video games. This analysis is employed to identify and classify linguistic components and narrative frameworks that are pertinent to disciplines such as discourse analysis, pragmatics, and systemic functional linguistics (SFL), in accordance with the theoretical framework presented by M.A.K. Halliday in his book An Introduction to Functional Grammar (2014).

Data collection was conducted by directly observing games, capturing dialogues, and documenting narrative elements, such as conversation transcripts, cutscenes, and character interactions. This technique adheres to the principle of participatory observation as outlined by Hammersley and Atkinson in their book "Ethnography: Principles in Practice" (2007). It involves researchers actively participating in the activities being studied in order to get comprehensive and detailed data. Furthermore, further research was conducted using secondary data derived from articles, reviews, and gaming manuals that specifically address narrative elements.

Data analysis was undertaken utilizing a qualitative approach through content analysis methodologies, as defined by Mayring in Qualitative Content Analysis: Theoretical Foundation, Basic Procedures, and Software Solution (2014). The data were evaluated by focusing on language factors in dialogue and story structure. A discourse analysis technique was utilized to investigate how language develops meaning and interactions between characters, based on Norman Fairclough's idea in Discourse and Social Change (1992). In addition, the pragmatics method focuses on the context of language use and the implications of meaning in conversation, as outlined by Stephen C. Levinson in Pragmatics (1992). Levinson in Pragmatics (1983). The SFL approach, according to Halliday's theory, was used to study the function of language in transmitting ideas, forming characters, and structuring the storyline. Data validation was conducted through triangulation techniques outlined by Denzin in The Research Act: A Theoretical Introduction to Sociological Methods (1978), by comparing observation results, dialog transcripts, and supporting literature to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the research results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Pragmatics as the approach for doing Linguistics research in Video Games

This research indicates that narrative materials in the video game Grand Theft Auto V (GTA V) can be examined from a pragmatic perspective, especially in terms of implicature, inferred intent, and situational context in discussions between characters. In this game,

speech between characters not only works as a tool to drive the tale, but also represents the dynamics of power, social ties, and communication tactics employed to achieve particular aims. In agreement with the theory of pragmatics proposed by Stephen C. Levinson in Pragmatics (1983), the data demonstrates that speech acts such as directive, expressive, and commissive are often utilized to construct characterisation and reinforce interactions in the story.

Data 1 (Game: GTA V)

Situation: Michael is talking to Franklin about the mission, and Michael uses an indirect approach to assert his authority.

Dialogue:

Michael: "You want to make it in this business, kid? Then you better listen and follow instructions."

Franklin: "Yeah, I hear you. Just make sure it's worth my time."

In this exchange, Michael performs an indirect directive speech act by hinting that Franklin must follow his instructions if he wants to succeed. The implicature is that Franklin's success hinges on his loyalty to Michael. Franklin's reaction demonstrates awareness of the implicature but with a confrontational tone, showing the power relationships and conflicts that exist in their relationship.

Data 2 (Game: GTA V)

Situation: Trevor is negotiating with an arms dealer about the price of an item he wants to buy.

Dialogue:

Trevor: "You know, I could take what I want, but I'm feeling generous today. Let's talk numbers."

Dealer: "Generous, huh? You mean you're ready to pay, or you want to take your chances?"

Trevor employs a commissive speech act by indicating a slight threat, but yet providing possibility for discussion. In the pragmatic context, Trevor's implicature is clear: he has the capacity to seize the things by force, but chooses to negotiate as a sort of "generosity." The dealer's response demonstrates knowledge of the implicature, but still questions Trevor's intentions, suggesting a conflict that commonly emerges in interactions involving power and implicit threats.

B. Sociolinguistics as the approach for doing Linguistics research in Video Games

A sociolinguistic approach to studying narrative assets in video games allows us to examine how language and culture impact each other in interactions between characters and virtual worlds. According to Dell Hymes in Foundations in Sociolinguistics: An Ethnographic Approach (1974), sociolinguistics emphasizes the necessity of understanding the social and cultural background in language use. In the context of video games, narrative assets such as dialog, dialect, jargon and cultural symbols in games represent social identities, power dynamics and language variants founded in diverse cultural backgrounds.

Example of Sociolinguistic Research Data in Video Games Narrative Assets:

Data 1 (Game: The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt)

Situation: A conversation between Geralt (main character) and villagers in the Skellige region.

The language used by the locals in this game is characterized by a dialect that reflects Nordic culture. The local dialect used by the people of Skellige reflects their social identity as a people living in a remote region with strong traditions. Through a sociolinguistic approach, the analysis reveals that the language used in the dialog is not only a means of communication, but also reinforces the cultural identity and social position of the characters. The use of Skellige-specific words and expressions, which are often different from those of characters from other regions in the game, shows that language variation is

influenced by geography and culture. This is in line with Labov's (2001) theory in Principles of Linguistic Change, which highlights the importance of understanding language variation in social and geographical contexts.

Data 2 (Game: Grand Theft Auto V)

Situation: The interaction between Franklin and Lamar who often use African American Vernacular English (AAVE) slang in their various conversations. Sociolinguistic Analysis: The use of AAVE in Franklin and Lamar's conversations not only adds authenticity to the characters, but also reflects their social and cultural backgrounds as citizens of the region.

C. Appraisal System as the approach for doing Linguistics research in Video Games.

The Appraisal System approach to analyzing narrative assets in video games allows us to explore how evaluations, attitudes, and emotions are expressed in interactions between characters and narratives. This theory, developed by Martin and White in The Language of Evaluation: Appraisal in English (2005), helps in identifying attitude, engagement and graduation in the language used by game characters. In the context of video game narratives, the Appraisal System is particularly relevant for understanding how players are invited to respond to situations, characters and conflicts through the language choices used in dialog and narrative.

Example of Appraisal System Research Data in Video Games Narrative Assets:

Data 1 (Game: The Last of Us Part II)

Situation: Dialogue between Ellie and Joel as they discuss their moral decisions.

The dialogue between Ellie and Joel often features strong evaluative expressions, especially in the attitude aspect involving affect, judgment, and appreciation. For example, when Ellie says, "You lied to me," this phrase not only indicates a feeling of disappointment, but also implies a negative moral judgment towards Joel's actions. The choice of words like "lied" and the tone in the dialog reveal emotional and moral evaluations of other characters, corresponding to affect in the Appraisal System. In addition, narratives often reinforce evaluations through graduation, where the intensity of emotion in statements such as "I can't trust you anymore" indicates an increase in emotional tension, which deepens the player's involvement in the narrative conflict.

Data 2 (Game: Life is Strange)

Situation: Max interacts with friends and other characters, where dialog choices affect the course of the story.

In the game Life is Strange, the language choices used by Max often focus on engagement and how the player is invited to take a certain position towards the events in the story. When Max chooses to express his feelings of guilt or concern, such as in the dialog "I'm not sure if I did the right thing," it reflects the use of engagement through uncertainty and openness to alternative evaluations. This kind of dialog leads the player to consider different points of view, inviting personal evaluation of the actions taken. Martin and White's (2005) theory refers to this as a heteroglossic strategy, where the space for alternative perspectives is expanded, thus increasing narrative depth and player participation.

Data 3 (Game: Red Dead Redemption 2)

Situation: Interaction between Arthur Morgan and Van der Linde gang members in a cnflictual situation.

Dialogue in Red Dead Redemption 2 often features explicit evaluations of actions and morality. For example, when Arthur Morgan states, "You're nothing but a traitor," this sentence contains a very strong element of judgment. In the context of the Appraisal System, judgment refers to moral and social character evaluation, and this statement directly judges another character's actions as wrong. The use of negative terms like "traitor"

is an example of how narratives use evaluative language to build conflict and encourage emotional reactions from players. Additionally, the graduation aspect is seen in the intensity of emotions expressed through word choices such as "nothing but," which reinforces the evaluative stance and deepens the narrative's influence on the player.

CONCLUSION

This research reveals that narrative assets in video games can be analyzed through various linguistic approaches, including pragmatics, sociolinguistics, and Appraisal System, to better understand how language in digital narratives creates complex experiences for players.

From a pragmatics perspective, narrative assets in video games such as dialog, character interactions, and situational context show how implicit meanings and speech act strategies are used to influence player actions and responses. For example, an analysis of the game GTA shows how the use of directive speech acts such as commands or instructions in interactions between characters influences the flow of the game and player decisions.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, narratives in video games also reflect social aspects such as identity, norms and ideologies that exist within the virtual world. Games like SimCity illustrate how language and narrative are used to shape power relations and strategic decisions in simulated social life, providing insights into the representation of society in the digital world.

Meanwhile, through the Appraisal System approach, this research highlights how evaluative elements such as attitude, engagement and intensity are integrated in narratives to create emotions and moral judgments. The analysis of The Last of Us game shows how evaluative language in dialog and narrative leads players to adopt a certain point of view, while creating an emotional attachment to the characters and story.

Overall, this study confirms that narrative assets in video games have great potential to be analyzed as objects of linguistic study. By combining pragmatics, sociolinguistics and Appraisal System approaches, this research makes an important contribution to understanding how digital narratives connect language, social context and evaluation in the game world, creating a rich and layered narrative experience.

REFERENCES

Halliday, M. A. K., & Matthiessen, C. (2019). *An Introduction to Functional Grammar* (4th ed.). Routledge.

Jenkins, H. (2016). Game design as narrative architecture. In K. Salen & E. Zimmerman (Eds.), *The game design reader: A rules of play anthology* (2nd ed., pp. 670-689). MIT Press.

Martin, J. R., & White, P. R. R. (2021). *The language of evaluation: Appraisal in English* (2nd ed.). Palgrave Macmillan.

Searle, J. R. (2019). *Speech acts: An essay in the philosophy of language* (50th

anniversary ed.). Cambridge University Press.

Gee, J. P. (2020). *What video games have to teach us about learning and literacy* (2nd ed.). Palgrave Macmillan.

Gee, J. P. (2021). Semiotic social spaces and affinity spaces: From *The Age of Mythology* to today's schools. In D. Barton & K. Tusting (Eds.), *Beyond communities of practice: Language, power and social context* (3rd ed., pp. 214-232). Cambridge University Press.

Van Dijk, T. A. (2019). *Discourse and context: A sociocognitive approach* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

Austin, J. L. (2022). *How to do things with words* (60th anniversary ed.). Oxford University Press.