

## **An Analysis Regarding Terrorist and Counter-Terrorist: Role of Counter-Strike Global Offensive (CS: GO)**

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**Abstract:** Since, it's debut in August 2012, Counter-Strike: Global Offensive (CS: GO) is one of the most popular and most played to date. CS: GO is one of many games that can be played competitively. In the gameplay aspect, CS: GO is not only a pure shooter game but also have role-playing factors in it's contents. Such role-playing aspects are the availability to play as a counter-terrorist and terrorist factions with their own respective objectives. This research aims to describe and explain the contents including audios, in-game descriptions and statements and the design of the game and also the possible connection to the real world counterparts applying discourse analysis utilizing semiotic approach.

**Key words:** Video game, counter-strike, global offensive, new media, cyberspace environment, counterparts, semiotic approach

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### **INTRODUCTION**

In recent years, video games grow at a considerable pace. This huge leap cannot be separated from the technological advances that makes it possible to have a video game with online-multiplayer capabilities which connects people worldwide to team up and challenge others without regarding the distances (Rioutl *et al.*, 2014). There are many kinds of video games available for public consumption, ranging from Pay-to-Play (P2P) games and Free-to-Play (F2P, Freemium) games with micro transations or in-game purchase (Gainsbury *et al.*, 2016).

#### **Literature review**

**Video game and new media of communication:** Video game is marked as one of new medias of communication. This is based from Laswell's interpretation of

communication which stated as who says what in which channel to whom with what effect (Mcquail and Windahl, 2015). Channel in Laswell's model means communication media that also includes internet, social media, films and video games that fall under new media of communication. As a media communication and without regarding any interaction from player to player inside the game, video games carry messages from their creators which act as communicators. Thus, making the players act as the communicant. And with it comes with the effects. Video game is quite different from the other new media and stands out as an interactive multimedia. This can be achieved because video game is a mix between multimedia and programming. Also, video game players can act that suits their needs (within the game limitation of course). Thus, this level of involvement with the communicant grants video game the interactive multimedia status (Hendratman, 2014). Video games are a complex designed

media that composed of several aspects such as programming, audio and visual/graphics. The visual aspect of a video game contains several designs that represent ideas or act as the developer's way to convey messages to the players (Mcquail and Windahl, 2015).

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This research apply qualitative discourse analysis utilizing semiotic approach, based on Roland Barthe's connotation and denotation dualitic notions of sign Sobur (2015). The data that would be analyzed are captured and collected from the counter-strike: global offensive video game and other source related to the research such as official websites, journals and proceedings.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Counter-Strike: Global Offensive (CS: GO) is a multiplayer First-Person Shooter (FPS) video game developed by hidden path entertainment and valve corporation released at August, 2012 for Microsoft Windows, OS X, XBOX 360 and Playstation 3 platforms. CS: GO pits 2 teams of player, the terrorist and counter-terrorist against each other. Other than eliminating each other there are separate objective for each sides. The terrorist side of teams are tasked with either planting and defending the bomb or defending the hostages from the counter-terrorist. While the counter-terrorist side must prevent the bomb from being planted or defusing the planted bomb and releasing or rescuing the hostages (Pinsof, 2012).

Based on the official and in-game description (Anonymous, 2012) the in-game counter-terrorist faction are divided into seven different character models which based on the real world counter-terrorism units. Those factions are: the French GIGN (Groupe d'Intervention de la Gendarmerie Nationale), the German GSG-9 (Grenzschutzgruppe 9 der Bundespolizei), IDF (Israel Defense Force), the United States FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation), the United Kingdom SAS (Special Air Service), the United States SEAL Team 6 (ST-6) and the United States SWAT (Special Weapons And Tactics) (Valve Corporation, 2012).

Meanwhile, the in-game terrorist faction also have multiple character models. The terrorist factions are named Anarchist, Balkan, Elite Crew, Phoenix Connexion, Pirate, Professional and Separatist (Anonymous, 2012). Most of the terrorist factions are fictional or loosely based and not named after real-world terrorist groups. That point

is based on the fact that counter-strike: global offensive act as a communication media (mass media). Thus, that decision is made to avoid any controversy regarding the terrorist faction within the game (Khairil *et al.*, 2017a, b). Whilst the counter-terrorist factions designs are pretty straightforward, the terrorist faction are fictional and not clearly based and named after their real world counterparts. There are still traceable clues that determine what groups or who the terrorist factions are based on.

The first of the terrorist faction is named Anarchist. This terrorist faction is added in the update of the game that released in 10th August 2012. Appearance-wise, the Anarchist is portrayed with hoodies (the hood is over their head), sunglasses, bandanas and dark pants or jeans that commonly called a black bloc (Lennard, 2017). This portrayal is based on the mainstream cime perpetrators, protesters or anarchist groups. The analysis of the in-game sound and radio statements that correspond with the Anarchist faction suggest that they have lack in cooperation or organization. The excitement from the statements also indicate that from their perspective, they see crimes as a mere sport and they have no apparent goals or beliefs (Mcquail and Windahl, 2015).

The second terrorist faction is the Balkan. Name-wise, the Balkan are based from the geographical area of South-Eastern and Eastern Europe, including countries such as; Albania, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia and Serbia called the Balkan Peninsula that gets its name from the Balkan mountains (Gray and Sloan, 2014). Judging by the style and design, the Balkan portrayed as a group that originated and operated mainly in the cold areas. It is because the characters are modeled with urban style Winter garments, like a thick jacket. This terrorist faction is quite possibly referencing the terrorist groups operated around Balkan Peninsula and even the Chechen's terrorist groups (Gray and Sloan, 2014).

The third faction is called the Elite Crew. This faction are described as the Middle Eastern fundamentalist that ruthlessly execute their operation such as hijacking airlines and poisoning the water supply of a cruise ship, that backed by Libya's and Syria's political support (Ham and Stratton, 2003). This faction is clearly designed based on various Middle Eastern extremist Jihadist and or Sunni Militant such as Taliban or Al-Qaeda. This is indicated by the use of Middle Eastern style theme of clothing such as the headwear and the sunglasses. Although, in the last few upates of the game, the appearance of the Elite Crew was revamped and given a more modern and urban look.

The fourth terrorist faction is the Phoenix Connection or the Phoenix. This faction is considered one of the oldest faction in the game which appeared at the  $\beta$  1.0 of the first generation counter-strike. The Phoenix connexion officially stated as Eastern Europe terrorist group that violently enforce their distorted ideology and carried out its operation in several countries such as Spain, Yugoslavia, Czech republic and Romania (Ham and Stratton, 2003). The fifth terrorist faction is the professional. Based on the official description of the professionals, it is stated that they are well-equipped thieves with no political or religious agenda (Anonymous, 2012). The professionals are designed with classy look of garments that include waiscoats, dark coloured pants, sunglasses and bag or pack of C4 bombs. The professionals are based on the gangsters and bank robbers, mostly the ones portrayed by gangster or heist movies.

The sixth faction is the Pirate. Based on the Pirate's official description that they are the modern pirates of the horn of Africa, their design, behavioural and speech patterns, it is clear that the Pirate faction is based from the Somalian Pirates. Thus, this faction are direct referene to the piracy in the Somalian coast (Bahadur and Archer, 2012). The seventh and the last terrorist faction is the Separatist. The Separatist wears an iconic white mask, a dark beret, shirts with their symbols and light coloured pants. The Separatist's design is based on the real life extremist-separatist group, Euskadi 'Ta Askatasuna (ETA), that claims Hegoalde or South Basque on Spain (Barcelona, 2007). This design sparked a controversy, especially with Spain consumer and especially, the Spain governments. One of the Spanish politician Carlos Urquijo stated that the game is immoral and also serves to humiliate the virtual victims, thus, demanding a ban for counter-strike: global offensive in Spain because of the offensive content of the game (Barillas, 2012).

It is true that playing video games have many benefits towards the player, both mentally and physically (Soyoof and Jokar, 2014; Barr, 2018). Video games also can be utilized as a competitive ground where any player can hone their skills and compete with each others. But the excessive use of video game can also lead to negative effects such as aggressive behaviour (Gutierrez, 2014) psychological distress (King and Delfabbro, 2014) gambling addiction and internet gaming disorder in general (King and Delfabbro, 2014). The content of a video game also become a decisive factor (Gutierrez, 2014).

The concept and gameplay of Counter-Strike: Global Offensive (CS: GO) and its predecessor is not a really a

new thing with so many games with action-shooter or first-person shooter genres that released even before the first generation of counter-strike. But with the expansion of a game's story telling and content aspects, one cannot expect not to find a game without flaws or controversy (Gutierrez, 2014). Such as the position of CS: GO that presents a controversial aspect to be able to take a role of a terrorist.

The very basic of the counter-strike games is actually harmless because the concept itself derived from a basic objectives which is capture the flag. In CS: GO case that basic objective is presented with a creative twist, e.g., planting the bombs in one of the predetermined areas for terrorist factions, defusing said bombs dor counter-terrorist factions and defending or rescuing hostages/VIPs (Anonymous, 2012). Combined with the terrorist and counter-terrorist concept, it aims to serve an immersive gameplay for the plays.

Guns, shooting, murder and violence in general are not really a new concept. Take Grand Theft Auto series, for example, this series of video games is packed with more controversial aspects not found in CS: GO and such content really affecting the players both mentally and physically (Gutierrez, 2014). Thus, such video games access are limited and are rated and labelled as M (Mature) or AO (Adult Only).

In the case of CS: GO, players need to formulate strategies to win each round. The strategies may vary from just rushing to eliminate every competitors to keeping the bombs safe untill it explodes. Some players may just recklessly charge headlong into enemy territory while the others may carefully plan their course of attack utilizing diversions and decoys. This diverse strategies to attack build communication skill, player's spatial skills and reflex (Barr, 2018).

Besides the reference into the real world terrorism and terrorist groups, CS: GO players also utilizing what some real world terrorist do. For example, some of the terrorist faction players also often observed aplying one Jihadist methods which is suicide bombing. In this strategies, the terrorist factions often rushing into one of the bombs sites and guarding the bombs as long as possible, usually, a couple seconds away before the bomb explodes or even the players will stay with the bomb until it explodes, thus, killing themselves. The goal of this strategy is to not giving any time for the counter-terrorist faction to defuse the bomb (Chandra *et al.*, 2016). For both terrorist and counter-terrorist players, this also means utilizing high-risk high-reward mindset (Barr, 2018; Petropoulos *et al.*, 2016) with counter strike's most iconic sign, a radio call mentioning bomb has been planted (Anonymous, 2012) as a start for a race against the clock to defuse, keeping the bomb safe until it's exploded or eliminating players from opposing teams (Chandra *et al.*,

2016). This also means that CS: GO are pushing the players and the possibility to implant reckless and risky behaviour also radical ideas within the players (Khairil, 2017 and Khairil *et al.*, 2017a, b) directly correlated with violence (Merwe, 2013).

The continuous fight between terrorist and counter-terrorist factions in CS: GO can also relatable into the real world where the actual fight between anti-terrorism force and the extremist and terrorist groups also still happening continuously (Khairil, 2017 and Khairil *et al.*, 2017a, b). In this context, the developer using CS: GO as the media, is raising awareness regarding the continuous fight against terrorism (Khairil *et al.*, 2017a, b). Based on the terrorist faction's designs, it can be defined that terrorism and extreme act can rise from any source even from the groundless and spontaneous terror act depicted by the Anarchist faction. Terrorism can also rise from the discontent of the officials or governments (depicted by the Separatist) or acts as coercive way to enforce a belief (depicted by the Phoenix Connexion faction). But the way the terrorist factions designed where most of them are referencing into the Muslim terrorist groups, also can be described as subliminal messages that Muslims are terrorists that have extreme ideas and act with violence.

### CONCLUSION

Video game is not only act as a media of entertainment, it can also act as a mass media of communication that reach out to many players worldwide. Video game also acts as a media to improve player's skills such as communication skills, teamwork, reflex, spatial cognition and sportmanship through competitive aspects of a game. CS: GO as a new media convey the developers message regarding awareness of the battle against terrorism. On the other hand, the way the characters are designed also means that the developers associate most terrorist groups with Muslims.

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