

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is the introductory of the research. This chapter will explain the research background, statement of problem, research purposes, research significance, previous studies, and definitions of key terms

1.1 Background of Research

In the past few decades, the advancement of technology has affected many aspects of human life, and literature is no exception. Technology affects literature in different ways, for example, many books and written documents are kept in a digital form so more people can access them and to prevent the possible loss or damage that can happen to the physical copy. The widespread access to technology is also responsible for the appearance of the new form of storytelling known as digital literature.

According to Rajathi & Kalamani (2020), Digital literature is created to promote the exchange of ideas and to increase easy access to literary works. In the past, movies were the most widespread of digital literature, but there are other concepts that have emerged in digital literature fields, such as hypertext fiction, interactive fiction, and video games. Even though all of them convey a story, unlike books, stories in these media are not meant to be printed into physical form as they are connected to other media such as images and sounds.

Despite having no physical form, according to Meyer (1997), “The most basic characteristic of literature, it seems to me, is that a literary work is a verbal text”. Based on that definition as long as it still uses basic components of literature, it can still be considered literature, despite being more interactive and combining text, image, and sound, these new forms are still considered literature

Video games have been recognized and becoming one of the most popular research studies of literature among scholars, especially the younger ones, due to its likeliness to present in their personal lives. Video games are powerful narrative

media that continue to evolve (Saito, 2021). At first, video games could only convey simple stories, but over time, they can now share more complex and more interactive stories. Especially due to many video games that integrate visual aspects and narrative text similar to movies, but video games place the reader, or in this case the player, not just watching and reading how the story unfolds, but as someone or a character inside the game that is directly involved with the story.

Unlike movies, video games place the reader not just as someone who reads the story, but as someone who actively takes part in the story, which allows the reader to interact with the story itself. Basically, interactivity in video games was the ability to partially or fully involve the player in making decisions for the characters or as a character. This decision often will affect how the story will progress. Due to this unique approach, many readers will feel more involved in the story while playing and remember or even feel the story on a more personal level.

Additionally, this interactivity isn't without limit; the players need to have some kind of limitation so the story can be conveyed properly, and for that reason, usually players are given a role as someone or something to prevent decisions that can ruin the story. Role-playing games are games that allow multiple players to take on the role of imaginary characters and operate with some degree of freedom in an imaginary environment (Fine, 2002 as cited in Domingues et al, 2024). Even though playing as someone feel restricting, most games compensate for this restriction by letting the players set their own pace, use their favorite approach to solve a problem, or even letting players decide the end of the story by choosing a certain option. If utilized properly, players can feel the satisfaction from their decision and still read the story as intended by the creators.

Monster Hunter: World are one such game, developed by Capcom and released in 2018, the fifth installment of the *Monster Hunter* series, and an action role playing game where players takes the role as Hunter. The hunter later will be tasked to either hunt or trap monsters in several diverse environments. When successful, the players will get corresponding monster parts as a reward, which

they can freely use to make better weapons and armors to suit their playstyle and to fight harder and stronger monsters.

The game takes place in the New World, a vast continent inhabited by various monsters and unknown dangers. Players will assume the role of a hunter tasked to investigate the ecosystem as part of the Research Commission. The hunters will start by gathering information, collecting samples, interacting with locals, and hunting or capturing monsters that may threaten the balance of the environment. Throughout the game progression, players will encounter a wide variety of monsters, each of them possessed unique and distinct appearances, abilities, behaviors, and ecological roles.

As the primary element of the gameplay, monsters served not only as obstacles, but also as an important part of the narrative and environmental elements. Players eventually have to identify and understand different monster species in order to prepare appropriate solutions and strategies for exploration and combat. To distinguish the monsters, each monster is assigned a unique name that often reflects its appearance, abilities, behavior, habitat, or other distinct characteristics. In conclusion, in this game, the monster names function more than a simple label, it can communicate meaning that highlights the monster's identity and representation within the game world.

Monster Hunter World: Iceborne is a major expansion of the game that was released in 2019. This expansion continues the events of the base game. This expansion introduced a new and unique region along with additional monsters, subspecies, variants, and narrative content. Following the base game, the newly introduced monsters possessed distinctive names that reflect unique characteristics and thematic influences. In conclusion, both *Monster Hunter: World* and the *Iceborne* expansion can provide a rich selection of monster names that can be examined as linguistic signs carrying multiple layers of meaning.

As names can carry meaning beyond their function as an identifier, they can be understood as a sign that can represent certain concepts, characteristics, or cultural associations. In fictional settings, names are often intentionally designed to reflect a character's appearance, abilities, behavior, or narrative importance. In

conclusion, analyzing monster names in *Monster Hunter: World* might need an approach that focuses on finding meaning, how meaning is constructed, and how meaning is communicated through signs. For analyzing fictional settings, semiotics can be one of the most suitable approaches to examine this process.

Several previous studies can provide context for the application of semiotics theory. Few previous research also specifically focus on the analysis of monster names, especially in *Monster Hunter: World*, but several studies can provide relevant context. The first research by Saputra and Andelina (2023) analyzed the monster design *Xeno'jiiva* from *Monster Hunter: World* and revealed the connection of the monster's appearance and its name, backstory, and narrative origin. They have conducted in-depth research about several cultures or sources, and even theory on how *Xeno'jiiva* came to be, and conclude that the design of *Xeno'jiiva* successfully integrates concept, visual design, and character behavior into a coherent whole, and they conclude that effective character design depends on three layers: concept story, visual form, and behavioral traits.

Then, on the application of the semiotic theory, Siregar (2022) conducted a semiotic analysis of a meaningful cultural ritual, more precisely Betawi culture of palang pintu using Roland Barthes semiotics theory. This research explains the layered meaning behind this ritual, the actions, symbolic values, and what ideological and mythical significance it has, and also provides an insight about ritual significance in Indonesia. This research showcases an interesting way of applying Roland Barthes semiotics theory and provides priceless insight into the application of the theory.

Similarly, Putri and Inayah (2023) are also conducting research using Roland Barthes' semiotics theory. They conducted an analysis on the script of the movie *Alladin*, then they identified and categorized the signs and items found that match Barthes semiotics framework. Their research provides another insight for the application of the theory and also the definition of each of the types and categorization mentioned in the research.

And lastly, Wibowo & Lubis (2022) conducted research about how names can carry semiotic significance. They found that the name of a place or in their

case, a lake is not arbitrary and just happens like that. By researching verbal myths and spoken stories from the locals, they conclude that the name is a sign of the local wisdom and awareness of the ecosystem and the lake itself. This research not only provides insight, but also an example on how a name can work as a sign of something, not just something given to differentiate and identify something

Semiotics is the study of signs, symbols, and their meanings as a form of communication, particularly as components of language or other communicative systems (Chandler, 2007). As monster names function as linguistic signs, semiotics can provide an appropriate framework for examining meanings within the names. Among various approaches, Roland Barthes' theory is deemed quite relevant as it explains how signs operate through layers of meaning, namely denotation, connotation, and myth.

According to Barthes, denotation is the most direct and literal meaning of a sign, while connotation refers to the cultural or ideological meaning associated with it. Additionally, connotative meanings can become naturalized and develop into myth, which Barthes says is an ideological message that appears natural and unquestioned. This method allows the writer to investigate not only the literal references but also the hidden, broader cultural meanings and myths that contributed to the monster identities within the game narrative.

Generally, players would not be specific in knowing about the reasoning behind the monster names in *Monster Hunter: World*. Because of this, the writer is interested in meanings that essentially can be found in every object, including monster names or fictional characters. Additionally, the writer also intends to give an understanding of why and how the myth assigned to each monster feels natural and fitting for the setting and the monster's identity.

1.2 Statements of problem

Based on the background above, this research is about finding the denotative and connotative meaning within the monster names in the video game *Monster Hunter: World*, which also includes *Monster Hunter World: Iceborne*. Additionally, in this research, the writer also intends to find why myth formed

around the monster names make the monster's appearance in the narrative very natural and how the myth develops from the denotative and connotative meanings.

Based on the background, the writer concludes that these are the main focuses of this research:

1. What denotative and connotative meanings are constructed by the monster names?
2. How do connotative meanings develop into myth and naturalize the monster's representation in the game?

1.3 Research Purposes

Based on the formulation of the research question above, the research objectives are:

1. To identify and analyze denotative and connotative meanings constructed by the monster names.
2. To examine how these connotative meanings develop into myth and naturalize the representation of the monsters in the game.

1.4 Research Significances

Research significance refers to the importance of research based on its contribution in aspects of theory and practice. According to Marshall and Rossman (2006). Theoretically, this research explains what has not been studied in the literature review. Practically, this research relates to the use of the research.

This research is made as a way of contribution in the study of semiotics, specifically focusing on Roland Barthes semiotics theory, how the theory can be properly applied, and why the theory is fitting for this research. Other than the theory application, this research also focuses on analyzing names as signs. Although analysis of names of places is quite common, this research focuses on analyzing names of characters inside a video game narrative, which are not as common. In conclusion, this research might be able

to provide insight into semiotics, particularly Roland Barthes theory and the practice of analyzing names and their significance using this theory.

Practically, this research can be relevant and useful to a wide range of audiences, from researchers to normal people. For example, for scholars and researchers focused on semiotics, this research can serve as a reference for the application of the theory, analyzing names using semiotics, and exploring the myth behind the name of something. But for reader, this research can serve as a learning medium to better understand semiotics, particularly Roland Barthes' semiotics theory, and how names are not chosen arbitrarily and might have a cultural background of some kind of origin.





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