

CHAPTER III

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the data are examined and analyzed to show how Orientalism on Edward Said portrayed in *American Sniper* movie. After highlighting the data in *American Sniper* there are some parts of the story which reflects Orientalism toward Iraq. The main point which will be discussed in this chapter is the manifestation of the Orientalism itself which is portrayed in the movie. In this case, negative stereotype toward Iraq from the eyes of westerners can be seen in the society as portrayed in the *American Sniper* movie. The discussion of this study will be divided into several aspects; The Orient is Timelessness, The Orient is Exotic, The Orient is Degenerate, and Orientalism constructs Binary Opposition.

3.1 The Orient is Timelessness

To begin with, the Orient is timelessness. Since Iraq considered as an Orient and America as an Occident, According to Said (1978, p.7), Orientalism assumes that Eastern countries did not change. The Westerners believe that the Orient and their people are far behind modern development of the "Enlightened" West. The Orient is often considered as primitive or backwards. From the viewpoints of the Westerners, time in the Eastern land is regarded as standstill and perpetual.

Nothing is really changed even a long time has passed. The Westerners believe

that the Eastern lands and their people are underdeveloped, obsolete and uncivilized.

American Sniper movie illustrates the aspect of timelessness through the Al-Qaeda and the leader known as Butcher. In the movie “the Butcher” is a lieutenant of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the Sunni insurgent, terrorist, and founder of Al-Qaeda in Iraq, which later became ISIS. Figure 3.1 show that Colonel Gronski is giving a brief description about Al-Qaeda.

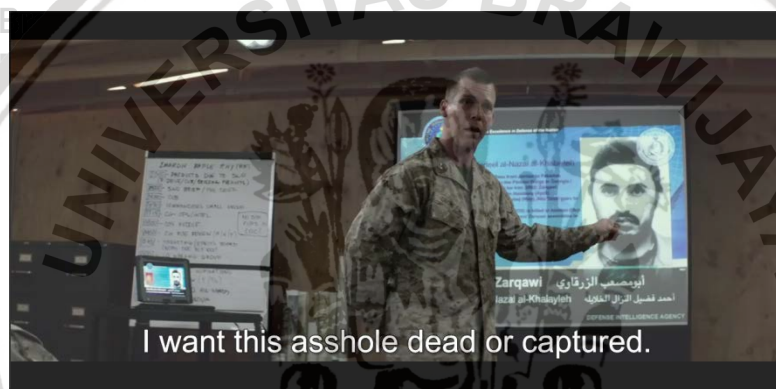


Figure 3.1 Colonel Gronski is giving a team briefing in the SEAL base camp.

(Source: *American Sniper*, 2014, minute 00:38:16)

The Butcher appearance is portrayed in the story as harmful. There is dialogue which shows how SEALs is really sure that the members of Al-Qaeda are harmful;

Colonel Gronski : This man with the blade. He's Jordanian militant, he's founded by Bin Laden, he is trained by Bin Laden and he is loyal to Bin Laden. His name is Zarqawi. Now this asshole is right now on the crown prince of Al-Qaeda in Iraq. His mercenary army AQI, they're 5000 strong. Now, these guys are not your average

shit-kickers. These guys are well-trained, they are well-paid and right now they are waging the largest urban assault since Vietnam.

(*American Sniper*, 2014, minute 37:23)

At times, Kyle continues to provide overwatch for marine units who are going door to door through an evacuated city, searching for an al-Qaeda leader named Zarqawi. As they going door to door they find a home where the family has refused to evacuate. Kyle questions the old man with the help of interpreter, showing him a picture of Zarqawi and asks him if he knows who he is. The old man says that Zarqawi's second command is a man known as the Butcher. He can give Kyle information on the Butcher but he wants \$100,000 in return. As the SEALs drive back to the man's home to bring him money, the Butcher found out that the man gave up information to the troops, and he kills the old man's young son with a handheld power drill. Figure 3.2 shows when the tragedy happened.

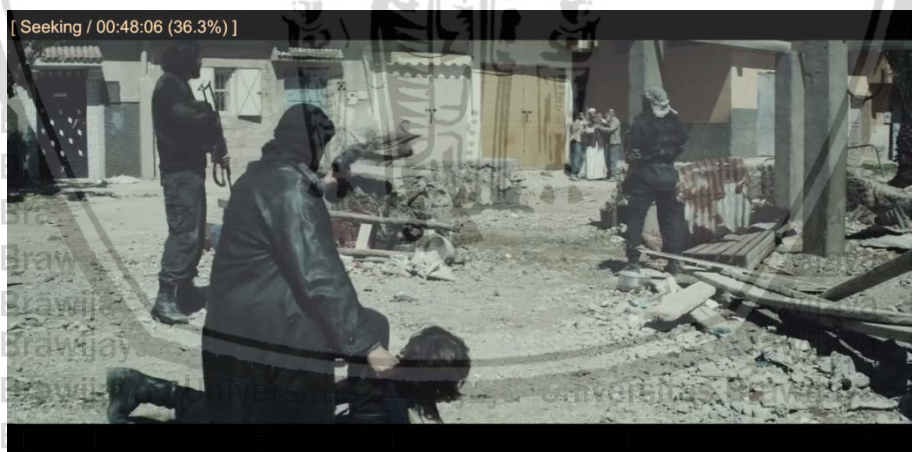


Figure 3.2 the Butcher torturing and executing an Iraqi child by taking power drill to his skull.

(Source; *American Sniper*, 2015, minute 00:48:06)

Another barbaric action from the Butcher can be seen from the scene when SEALs enter the building where the Butcher and his guards hiding. As portrayed in Figure 3.3, there are a lot of mutilated dead bodies of American soldiers in one room. The Butcher and his guards seems to killed the American soldier and then cut up the body parts of dead body.



Figure 3.3 Dead bodies of American soldiers.

(Source; *American Sniper*, 2015, minute 01:09:15)

In *American Sniper*, the director claims about the Butcher and his guards image that it is also portrayed as the timelessness of the Orientalism. Representing the Western viewpoint Kyle thinks that the Butcher and his guards are barbarians.

It is shown from Kyle expression that he has a deep shocked when he sees a lot of dead bodies of American soldiers. It is really shown in Figure 3.4 how Kyle has the strong feeling that the the Butcher is savage. He shows the expression of angry, dislike and fear at the same time to the Butcher and his guards.



Figure 3.4 Kyle sees the corpse of American soldiers.

(Source; *American Sniper*, 2015, minute 01:09:17)

The picture of the Butcher in the story reflects an attitude of the Eastern through the aspect of timelessness by Edward Said. Even though a long time has passed, the Westerners' conceptions of the Easterners have not changed. In the *American Sniper*, the Butcher is revealed as the stereotypical image of barbarians.

Barbarians refer to members of a people who are considered by another nation or group to have primitive degeneracy, rudeness and unsophistication. To illustrate, the Butcher use drill to kill people and mutilated bodies of victims. This type of character and his behavior are unfamiliar to foreigners. It is suggested that the Butcher are given a role of dangerous people. He does everything he wants without negotiation. He is heartless and merciless. This implies that the westerners consider Iraq as an uncivilized and barbaric country. From the Westerners' point of view, the attitude of the Butcher and his guards represents as savage and brutal due to their barbaric actions.

Apart from their attitude, the Butcher and his guards are demonstrated as savage through their costume. The Butcher and troops described as young with dark skin colour, maybe twenty until thirty, with a kick-boxer's build. As portrayed in figure 3.5, they wore a sorban (Islamic headscarf) and jubbah (Islamic long robe), wearing all black and also have a beard.



Figure 3.5 The Al Qaeda dressing in American Sniper movie

(Source; American Sniper, 2015, minute 00:49:26)

In the scene, they are portrayed wearing black clothes which actually are not a coincidence. According to Copyscape (2009), “The color black relates to the hidden, the secretive and the unknown, and as a result it creates an air of mystery.

It keeps things bottled up inside, hidden from the world... Black is intimidating, unfriendly and unapproachable because of the power it exudes.” This gives an impression to people that these men are not good and harmful. People will directly think that all of them are the criminals of the movie who will act as the antagonist ones. They also portrayed having a beard, a beard commonly found in terrorists.

Member of Al Qaeda and the Butcher's physical appearance is revealed as the

stereotypical image of Terrorist. Terrorist has been described as violence against the civilian populations, for political ends. BBC News (2008) says that on September 11, 2001, the terrorist attacked United States using the name of Islam under command Osama Bin Laden whose came from Al-Qaeda. Because of the accident many of innocent civilians died. Then, American media always present the news of terrorism and Islamic fundamentalist. The Westerners especially in United States are very careful toward Muslim and Middle East around their life. The Westerners believe that the Iraq people are dangerous, hated freedom, uncivilized and was a threat to them.

Another timelessness portrayed through the role of women in the movie, in discussions of general issues facing women in Iraq, the diversity of female and conditions is often lost. Accustomed the stereotypical depictions, westerners are told that Iraq women are passive, weak and always veiled. Figure 3.6 shows a picture of Iraqi women that screaming hysterically when they saw a young boy and the old man killed by the Butcher. The women wear a long dress with a dark color such as black, brown, white and they wear a veil as their daily costume.



Figure 3.6 Picture of Iraqi women.

(Source; *American Sniper*, 2015, minute 00:49:22)

Westerners thought that people in Iraq were completely different than theirs, especially the women. In the movie, the common stereotypes about women in Iraq are they can only wear an abaya (the long, black dress worn by many Muslim women) and hijab (a head covering) this implies that Iraqi women are not free, bound by the clothing code which limit women.

Besides, Iraq culture dictates how people of a certain gender must act and even what their job selections. In the movie, most of Iraqi women not allowed to be heard by a man, they also have to give time to religious practices and be a diligent wife, keeping up with cooking, controlling children, and other household chores. As portrayed in figure 3.7 when the SEALs break into a home of the man that lives there with his family, then, the man tells them that it is Eid al-Adha and he wants to invite them to be guests at his table in the dining room, while his wife serves meal to the SEALs. The positions of woman in the frame represent her position in society and culture. It is shown from her expression, she looks scared and weak.



Figure 3.7 Iraqi woman serves dinner to her family and the SEALs

(Source; *American Sniper*, 2015, minute 01:04:22)

The westerners thought that the situation of Iraqi women has been generally worse under Islamic law. Islamic law itself has many provisions that leave women at a clear disadvantage. Under traditional Islamic law, woman could marry only one man at a time, men were allowed up to four wives and an unlimited number of concubines. At the *American Sniper*, the Iraqi women is revealed as the stereotypical image of weak and passive. Women were legally required to be submissive and obedient to their husbands; were they not, their husbands were entitled to beat them and to suspend all maintenance payments.

Therefore, Iraq is portrayed as an uncivilized and backward country through the Butcher barbaric action and the role of Iraqi women. The Westerners consider that the Iraq culture and their people are needed to be civilized by the West.

Through this movie the director portrayed Iraq conditions far below the American standard of morality in terms of culture and its inhabitants.

3.2 The Orient is Exotic

Secondly, the Orient is exotic. According to Said (1978, p.1), the Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, and remarkable experiences.

The Orient was regarded as oddly different, unusual, fantastic or bizarre. The Orient was a source of marvel and curiosity for Western writers and artists.

In *American Sniper* movie, everything on Iraq country looks strange in the eyes of the Westerners. The director depicts how Iraq has a hot and dry climate.

The climate is influenced by Iraq's location between the subtropical aridity of the Arabian Desert areas and the subtropical humidity of the Persian Gulf. The Iraqi capital was the hottest city on the planet with the mercury hitting an unbearable 120 degrees Fahrenheit, according to The Weather Channel. While westerners would not tolerate the Iraq climate because in the west the temperature is not as hot as in Iraq. There is a scene show how Navy SEAL sniper Chris Kyle is perched on a rooftop, scoping out the path of a US military convoy through his sniper rifle. In the movie portrayed summer season in Fallujah, Iraq. At that time Kyle felt the heat and complained to his marine guard. The scene shows how Kyle dislikes the temperature in Iraq country and everything in this country look strange for Kyle and his marine guard which is shown by the following dialogue.

Kyle : It's fucking hot box.

Marine guard : Man, the fucking dirt here tastes like dog shit.

Kyle : Oh, well, you'd know, wouldn't you?

Marine guard : Shut the fuck up.

(*American Sniper*, 2014, minute 00:01:20)

It is shown from their dialogue that they have a deep dislike with Iraq country. This marine who says bad words to the Iraq country has a problem with the circumstances in that place. He is portrayed as someone who felt that the condition in this country is oddly different. Westerners have never experienced these strange circumstances in their countries, so these make them wonder.

Furthermore, the director portrayed a strange eating habit of Iraq people through the movie. In the movie, the SEALs join for Eid al-Adha supper with a family that lives in one of building in Iraq. That family served them goat meat in the table and the SEALs don't know how to eat those meal. As portrayed in figure

3.8:



Figure 3.8 A man and his family invite the SEAL to join for a meal

(Source; *American Sniper*, 2015, minute 01:04:20)

Squirell : That's very nice.

Tony : Take a cucumber. Take a cucumber and put it in a tube with vinegar.

Biggles : Yeah.

Tony : Stick in cayenne pepper, add a lemon in it and let it soak overnight.

Biggles : It's that, just add vodka. That's the idea. You wanna get in on it?

Tony : Let's do it. I'm ground-floor investor.

Biggles : All right.

Kyle : Biggles, you never cooked a day in your life.

Tony : Dude. That was the real question. That was super real.

D' : Squirell? You want some olives?

Squirell : No, I don't do olives, man.

Tony : Somebody will get on that lamb head?

Squirell : No, no.

Tony : Come on, man. Get some brains!

(Source; *American Sniper*, 2015, minute 01:04:20)

The dialogues are between Squirell, Tony, Biggle and Kyle. They eat and talking boisterously, they tease each other using those meals. They also make the lamb head as a joke. It is shown from their dialogues when Tony offered them to eat the lamb's head and Squirell refused, then Tony said "Come on, man. Get some brains!" It implies that eating habits of Iraq people are weird and bizarre for the Westerners. In Western countries, eating goat meat is really weird and it is very nasty. Goats are not particularly popular in American cuisine. Goats are used more for cheese or milk, and goats are not considered as food. However, the director portrays that Iraq people consume goat meat as common foods on a daily basis.

Thus, Iraq is portrayed as an unusual and strange country through the climate conditions and eating habit of the people. Iraq country was oddly different in the eyes of Weterners. Iraq is an Oriental land was a wild and risky place which needed to be "civilized" by the Occident.

3.3 Orient is Degenerates

Thirdly, the Orient degenerates. According to Said (1978, p.40) The Orientals are fixed with stereotypes: cowardliness, laziness, untrustworthiness, fickleness, laxity, violence and lust. American Sniper movie illustrates the aspect of degenerate through the woman and the young boy attitude. In the movie the scene begins with a woman and a young boy appear in the doorway of the same building and walk toward the convoy. As portrayed in figure 3.9, Kyle reports the woman and boy, noting that the woman is not swinging her arms as she walks and appears to be carrying something. No one in the convoy can see it to confirm. He watches through the scope as the woman removes something from her cloak and hands it to the boy, and he realizes that it is a grenade. He again gets the green light to shoot, but his marine guard warns him that he will be sent to prison for shooting a child, if he's wrong. As the young boy starts running toward the convoy with the grenade in his hand, Kyle pulls the trigger and kills him.



Figure 3.9 The Woman hand the grenade off to the young boy.

(Source; *American Sniper*, 2015, minute 00:27:01)

The woman starts wailing and running toward the boy, and Kyle watches her closely. She runs past the boy's body to grab the grenade he dropped and continue running at the convoy. As portrayed in figure 3.10, she is about to fling the grenade falls short of the convoy and explodes, leaving the troops unharmed.



Figure 3.10 The Woman attacked U.S Marine with Russian made RKG-3 Anti-tank grenade.

(Source; *American Sniper*, 2015, minute 00:27:47)

The picture of the woman and young boy in the story reflects an attitude of the Eastern through the aspect of degenerates by Edward Said. In the *American Sniper*, the woman and young boy is revealed as the stereotypical image of violence. She was like sacrificing the young boy just to kill American soldiers.

Even small children have been taught to be a terrorist by throwing grenade. Kyle thought that the woman just wanted Americans dead no matter what, he also think that what they were fighting in Iraq is savage and despicable evil. As what his marine guard states when Kyle shot the woman in the line below;

Marine guard : Fucking evil bitch.

(*American Sniper*, 2014, minute 00:28:01)

This line can be implied that Iraq people are all bad in everything in the eyes of the Westerners. Westerners thought what Iraq people means about jihad is an order to kill every non-Muslim. Another great misconception that exists is the truth about jihad or “holy war” in Islam. The ideas of war and violence have become related to the Islamic religion from the movie. Jihad is so often apparent in this movie because the westerners think it is Islam’s justification for war and violence.

The West has given a negative image on Islam. This movie becomes a common image to the general public that all Muslim are terrorists. As written by Edward Said in his book, *Covering Islam* (1981, p.3) talks about how the media and experts determine how we see the rest of the world. “The term Islam as it is used today seems to mean one simple thing, but in fact is part fiction, part ideological label, part minimal designation of a religion called Islam. Today Islam is peculiarly traumatic news in the West. During the past few years, especially since events in Iran and Iraq caught European and American attention so strongly, the media have therefore covered Islam: they have portrayed it, characterized it, analyzed it, given instant courses on it, and consequently they have made it known.” The narrative sets up the war as a morality play: there are evil terrorist, and Chris Kyle needs to kill them. It’s as simple as that.

Another degenerating scene is when Kyle faces with an unexpected situation during one overwatch post. Kyle watches a man walks out onto the street carrying a grenade launcher. Kyle kills the man. In figure 3.11 is really shown how a

young boy who had been playing nearby is startled and runs over. Kyle is concerned that the young boy will try to pick up the grenade launcher and he will have to kill him. The young boy struggles to get the grenade launcher on his shoulder, and Kyle prepares himself to shoot the boy. The boy finally gives up and runs away, and Kyle is clearly relieved.

There is dialogue in the movie which shows how Kyle too afraid to see the young boy held the gun because if he is still doing it, Kyle forced to shoot the young boy;

Kyle : Don't pick it up. Don't you fucking pick it up. Son of a bitch. Fucking drop it. Drop it, you little cocksucker.

(Source; *American Sniper*, 2015, minute 01:35:42)



Figure 3.11 The young boy try to pick up the grenade launcher.

(Source; *American Sniper*, 2015, minute 01:35:42)

In the eyes of westerners, the image of young boy portrayed negative idea.

The young boy is revealed as the stereotypical image of laxity. Westerners thought that children in Iraq were not monitored properly by their parents and they had been taught to struggle with how to kill American soldiers since childhood by their parents. It leads the Westerners to think that Iraq people are not good. The

young boy is very reckless and he learns to become murderer to defend his country and religion. Another distorts in this movie, Kyle repeatedly refers to Iraqi as murderer and this movie makes no effort to prove him wrong. When another soldier questions whether Kyle may have shot an innocent man, Kyle simply shouts him down and the issue never comes up again. The idea that Iraqis could be much else other than terrorist, or that an Iraqi might take up arms for any reason other than to kill Americans, it doesn't really factor in *American Sniper's* narrative.

Thus, Iraqi people are portrayed as a violence and laxity through the image of the woman and young boy. In the eyes of the Westerners, Iraqi people fit in all kinds of negative idea. Iraq needs to be civilized and made to conform to the Western standard of morality because Westerners think that they have the authority for controlling Iraq.

3.4 Orientalism Constructs Binary Oppositions.

Orientalism sees binary oppositions between the West and the East. Said (1978, p.40) defined the term binary opposition as the oppositions such as nature/culture, white/black, male/female, mind/body, etc. The Occident is everything and the Orient is not. The West is the best while the East is the worst. The East and the West are positioned through the construction of an unequal dichotomy. The Oriental is "irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, different; thus the European is rational, virtuous, mature, normal"

Firstly, the movie represents the binary oppositions of the colonizer versus the colonized. In *American Sniper*, America is regarded as the Westerners who are the colonizer whereas Iraq is regarded as the Eastern land that is a place to be colonized. This sanitization of Western history and patronization and demonization of the non-West, and specifically Iraq, was extremely prevalent throughout the entire film. It paints a very black and white depiction of the Iraq War; an “us” versus “them”, “good” versus “evil” binary. There is no context provided for the war, but figure 3.12 shows exactly a scene from 9/11 of the World Trade Center collapsing being shown on the television.



Figure 3.12 News about 9/11 accident in the U.S

(Source; *American Sniper*, 2015, minute 00:09:51)

Just like the dialogue shows below;

Anouncer : This is special report.

KOPPEL : Those explosions set to go off at the U.S embassies.

In Dar er Salaam, Tanzania, Nairobi, Kenya were clearly a part of someone’s war against the United States. More than 80 dead, more than 1700 injured in two bomb blasts today, which exploded just minutes and 450 miles apart. It is still unclear who our enemy is although the embassies were obviously the targets.

Kyle : Hey, Jeff. Jeff. Look at this. Look what they did to us.

(*American Sniper*, 2014, minute 00:09:51)

The scene is right before Chris Kyle deploys for his first tour, it implies that the Iraq war was a deliberate response to 9/11; many individuals who are educated on current events know that the attack on 9/11 didn't have anything to do with Iraq. In fact, many would argue that the U.S went to Iraq based on the lie of Saddam Hussein developing weapons of mass destruction, something later exposed to be completely false. The war, in other words, was not actually about 9/11. And, crucially, the Iraqi weapons of mass destruction that were the basis of the war turned out not to exist. The movie's exclusion of the United States' faults with its involvement in Iraq makes it seem as if the suffering of the Iraqi people is justified and a necessary means to protect those in the United States. A point made clear in *American Sniper* movie was the "danger and evil" that awaited those who went to Iraq.

In a scene where Chris Kyle speaks with one of his higher-ups, Marc Lee told:

Marc Lee : Welcome to Fallujah, the new wild west of the old Middle East.

Marc Lee : The city was evacuated. Any military-aged male still here, is here to kill you. Let's bring these boys in safe and get our asses back home.

(*American Sniper*, 2014, minute 00:25:28)

This dialogue completely ignores the civilians who have chosen to not leave their home or was physically or financially unable to do so, and attempts to justify the home invasions by U.S soldiers into any home.

From the excerpt above, it can be interpreted that America wants to carry out the mission. According Fersyhana (2011, para.5) some missions invasion is considered a noble task the U.S, among others, as follows: to end the regime of

Saddam Hussein, to identify, isolate, and eliminate weapons of mass destruction, to catch and carry out terrorist of that State, to collect data related intelligence that can be used in the network combating international terrorism, to collect intelligence data associated with a global network of black market trade in weapons of mass destruction, to end the sanctions and as soon as possible to send humanitarian aid to meet the needs of the Iraqi people.

All the reason issued by the U.S becomes a lie widely recognized by the world internationally. Iraq proved not to develop weapons of mass destruction as alleged and Saddam Hussein has no ties to Osama bin Laden along with Al-Qaeda. There is a general perception that economic differences were the dominant factors of the U.S invasion. Some calculations related to economics and business motives as follows: First, petroleum wealth held by Iraq is the second largest oil reserves after Saudi Arabia. In addition, according to the U.S Energy Information Administration, Iraq has 73 crude oil fields and only 15 farms have been developed. Second is post-war reconstruction project that will benefit the U.S. The destruction of infrastructure caused by war will produce reconstruction projects with substansial funds. As the protagonist of the invasion, the U.S will take these projects to reap huge profits postwar. So, the aim of U.S invasion is U.S would like to take advantages of the resources in Iraq. However, when the colonizer gets what they want, for example, petroleum and other resources, they eventually leave from the colonized place.

The second binary opposition is between the educated and the ignorant, or foreigners and Iraqi people. Iraq is a part of the Orient, a place of ignorance,

naiveté, inferiority and uncivilization while the West is the Occident, a seat of knowledge, learning, superiority and civilization. In the movie this sequence starts off with Kyle and the US soldiers are “clearing” houses looking for someone that can give them information on Zargawi's whereabouts. Kyle takes the lead as they breach a house where they find a child. He points his rifle at him and yells at him to get down on the ground. The child screams and the old man runs up to them saying that “he doesn't understand”, but is beaten in the face with a rifle butt and held down on a sofa. There are also lines from the dialogues between Kyle and the old man which shows the old man's inefficiency skill of English;

Kyle : Moving! Get down on the grown right now! Get your fucking ass down!

The old man : No, no he no understand

Kyle : Why are you here? You're supposed to be evacuated. Why you still here?

The old man : I'm Sheikh Al-Obeidi

Kyle : Sheikh alla-who?! Who the fuck are you?!

The old man : This is my home! I stay!

Kyle : I don't give a fuck it's your home! This is a war zone, sir!

The old man :You are welcome here! You are my guest! But tell the soldiers to come in.

Sanchez : This haji just wants us all in here so here can blow us up.Check his ass for a vest.

The old man : If he see American, he know we speak.

Kyle : Who?

The old man : Please.

Kyle : Who knows talking of us?

The old man : Please. Come in.

Kyle : Who knows we're talking?

The old man : He come. He very bad. Please.

(*American Sniper*, 2014, minute 00:42:13)

Chris keeps screaming at them, asking why they are still there when the area is supposed to be evacuated. The old man explains that he is sheikh al-Obeidi and this is his home and that's why he's staying. Kyle replies “I don't give a fuck it's

your home, this is a war zone sir". The sheik tries to invite the soldiers to his home, saying that they are his guests, but the soldier says that "this haji (in this context, a disrespectful slang referring to Muslims or Arabs) just wants us all in here so he can blow us up. Check his ass for a vest". The sheik says that "he" will know that they have spoken if "he" sees Americans. Kyle wants to know who this "he" is and the sheik tries to explain using body language and saying that he is very bad. Chris orders him to lie on the floor with his hands on his back so they can search him.

A stereotype of Iraqi people is portrayed through the old man. In the eyes of the westerners, Iraqi people are considered ignorant and uneducated. In *American Sniper*, the old man does not know nor understand English. He cannot communicate even in simple English. The old man needs an interpreter to have a discussion with Kyle. The old man's language skill is negatively portrayed. Because of the poor English speaking skills of the old man, Iraqi people are presented as ignorant and uneducated whereas the Western people are knowledgeable and learned. The Westerners regard themselves as civilization that the English language is used to be as a norm.

Therefore, the concept of binary oppositions in this movie portrayed between colonizers >> colonized and educated >> ignorant. Iraq and U.S are positioned through the construction of an equal dichotomy. The superiority legitimated Westerners efforts to civilize the East because in the eyes of westerners, Iraq country and its people need to be developed.

