

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURES AND RESEARCH METHOD

2.1 Cultural studies

Cultural studies is not culture defined in the narrow sense. As the objects of aesthetic excellence (high art) nor culture defined in an equally narrow sense or as a process of aesthetic, intellectual and spiritual development. Yet, cultural studies is to understand the culture, as Raymond Williams said, "as a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period or a group" (1976). Thus, cultural studies seeks to study cultural phenomenon in various societies and historical periods. The studies which is focused on studying game is called game studies.

Game studies or ludology is a discipline of cultural studies that deal with all type of games throughout history. Ludology is focused on understanding the structure and elements as well as creating typologies and models for explaining the mechanics of games. According to Frasca, "Ludology can be defined as a discipline that studies games in general, and video games in particular" (Frasca, 2003). Ludology has several field of researches, one of them is the social science field. The purpose of this field of ludology is to investigate the motives of people on playing games. Thus, video games become the objective in researches because video games provide a valuable opportunity of learning, as Gee said, certain qualities present in the medium of video games provide valuable opportunities for learning (2003).

Besides, video games are cultural products. According to Toscano, “Video games, like films, are cultural products that enact culture and display values entwined with culture.” (2006). Thus, video game do cultural work, and gamers acquire cultural literacy by absorbing video game narratives. As cultural products, video games reflect hegemonic values. For example, living in capitalist society, players can expect games to reflect values related to acquiring wealth, perseverance, and free markets. In order to get a virtual wealth, players are working hard by completing tasks that build a character’s profile and skill capability. Games also provide a great deal of highly interactive feedback, which is crucial to learning (Prensky, 2001). It means, the feedbacks received while playing on-line games is not merely comes from a computer’s program, it is also comes from the computer’s program that controlled by human. Interference of computer in interactivity can be explained by this diagram:

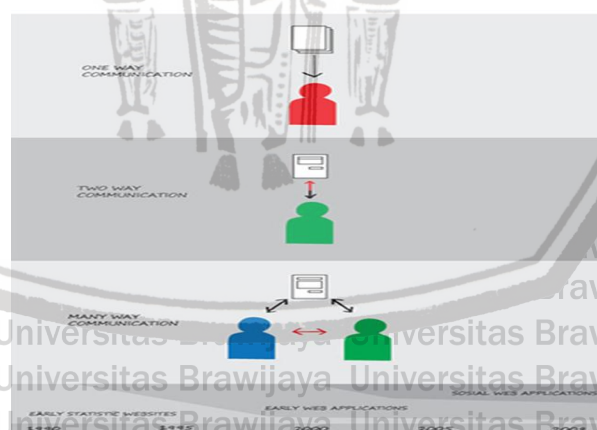


Figure 2.1: Human Communication forms through computer, (Berkeley, 2008)

Therefore, Berkeley argues that Interactivity is a causative factor of on-line game to attract the players to additively play the game. Texts and symbols becomes the medium, the players actively interpret then respond them through

action. Interactivity is means that players perform participation on various activities. In example, they learn how to *face – to – face* each other’s on monitor, control system and the terms of game itself. Video games are complex multimodal texts that both tell stories and invite audience interpretation. Gamers enter virtual worlds with rules that mimic culture and provide entertainment for leisure activities. It focused on the players’ pleasure and finally it ends on how they explore the virtual space.

Through exploring, players are learning by doing, learning from experience and problem solving in context. Gee discussed ways in which video games can provide a context for learning by encouraging active and critical thinking while players engage with a domain of learning as a complex system rather than as isolated facts, (2005). Further, as the player mastered the basic, the psychology, emotion and adrenalin is starting involved. They will drown into new world that different with their real life. It is not only being a spectatorship, but also immersion.

Almost of MMORPGs provide a social interaction through chat, friend list and guild system, require players to perform repetitive tasks, trading in the market, farming the materials and many more. Yet these features are among the most compellingly immersive experiences available. This immersion is offered by a game, there are at least four types of players with different motivations and reasons for playing an MMORPG: those who enjoy “achievement within the game context,” those who enjoy exploration of the game,” those who enjoy

“socializing with others,” and those who enjoy “imposition upon others” (Bartle, 1996).

2.2 Simulation

Representation is the process by which members of a culture use language broadly defined as any system which deploys signs, any signifying system to produce meaning. Hall defines it as *Constructionist* approach, producing meaning depends on the practice of interpretation, and interpretation is sustained by us actively using the code (Hall, 1980). Representation involves making meaning by forging links between three different orders of things, people, events and experiences. The representation’s ‘subject’ and the ‘place of subject’ are produced through discourse. According to Foucault:

The discourse itself produces ‘subjects’ – figures who personify the particular forms of knowledge which the discourse produces.

These subjects have the attributes we would expect as these are defined by the discourse: the madman, the hysterical woman, the homosexual, the individualized criminal, and so on. These figures are specific to specific discursive regimes and historical periods.

But the discourse also produces a *place for the subject* (i.e. the reader or viewer, who is also ‘subjected to’ discourse), (Foucault, 1982).

Therefore, the player of MMORPG are the subject and a place of the subject is virtual world. In MMORPG, players are the reflection of society, quests are the reflection of events and experience points are the reflection of experiences

that become a reward after completed the quest. Video games are not just based on representation but on an alternative semiotical structure known as simulation.

Simulation does not simply retain the generally audiovisual characteristics of the object but it also includes a model of its behaviors. Video games are not merely give a narrative but also simulation, a picture of dragon from Greek's mythology will only tell us information about the shape and color of it, it will not roar or fly when manipulated. In *Harry Potter: Goblet of Fire*, the dragon are flying, roaring and even shooting a fire breath, but the audiences cannot manipulate it since film sequence are fixed and unalterable, according to Frasca, picture and movie are only give narrative's representation that cannot be manipulated by the audiences. On the other hand, *Dragon Nest* allow the players to perform actions that modify the behavior of the system in a way that is similar to the behavior of the actual fight against a dragon. If the players hit the dragon it will roar in pain. Games are just a particular way of structuring simulation, just like narrative is a form of structuring representation.

Based on Baudrillard's argument, simulation is embracing the real situation in simply terms. Simulation made to give a person feels of something they cannot do in real world by giving them the values that close to reality. Video game, offers a simulation such as, trading, farming, fighting against each other, killing and many more. The avatar is a representation of player to connect to that simulation world. An effective simulation will not merely deceive one into believing in a false entity, but in fact signifies the destruction of an original reality that it has replaced. He said, "to simulate is not simply to feign... feigning or

dissimulation leaves the reality intact...whereas simulation threatens the difference between 'true' and 'false,' between 'real' and 'imaginary', (1983).

There is a satisfaction when players can control their character in game to slayed down a monster as if they done it literally in real life.

This is called Rhetoric of the self, where "...play is idealized by attention to desirable experiences of the players – their fun, their relaxation, their escape – and the intrinsic or aesthetic satisfaction of the play performances" (Sutton-Smith, 2001).

BAUDRILLARD'S FOUR LOGICS OF OBJECTS			
USE-VALUE	EXCHANGE VALUE	SYMBOLIC EXCHANGE	SIGN-VALUE
functional	economic/commercial	gift (Mauss)	consumption
practical operations	equivalence	ambivalence	difference
world	market	subject	other objects
instrument	commodity	symbol	sign
what the object does	what it's worth	relation to subject	relation to other signs
fridge stores food	2 butter = 1 gun	wedding ring	fashion

Table 2.1: object's logic table by Baudrillard

Thus, the term of representation has showed up. Players begin to operate a game in virtual space through this representation, "Computer simulations bring the tools of narrative to mapmaking, allowing the individual not simply to observe structures, but to become experientially immersed in their logic" (Curran, 2006).

This state shows that, on-line game is not only observing a structure or the regulation, but also immersed the structure into their logic. Everything that described on the monitor is real, the monster, sword, armor, the world situation, etc. they are the symbol that represented the real one. Therefore, by playing on-line aggressive type of game, it has a linear connection to the aggressiveness on the players. For example, when a person playing *Dragon Nest*, he or she slays, crushes a monster or an enemy continuously, he or she will embedded that action in their mind and becomes logic to decide the act that will they take to face the same situation.

In MMORPG, players are the society and the game is the world where they live. They are doing activities online with their avatar such as doing a quest, trading, farming, chatting with an online friend or guild mate and many more. Gamers will consume anything that offered by the game including their money to fulfil their needs. Therefore exchange value of virtual item on game has increased then the substantial value of it.

2.3 *Dragon Nest* as MMORPG

Dragon Nest is a free-to-play fantasy MMORPG developed by Eyedentity. It uses a non – targeting combat system ensuring that players have complete control over every single one of their character’s movement. *Dragon Nest* requires users to advance their characters by teaming up and travelling into instanced dungeons. There are several classes that provide as playable character that players can choose. Each class has different role in game, it classified into three major groups, DPS, tanker and supporter.

In specific, player will need a good physical attack or magical attack status to be a good DPS. DPS stands for damage per second; it is a certain of game's term for those who have a great damage deal to monsters and bosses. They are usually placed in the first row or second row of frontline battle. Then, they need a good physical and magical defense to be a good tanker. Tanker is players that hold and distract the bosses and the other classes can attack it from behind without taken much damage from monsters or at least to minimize the taken damage, placed in the first row of frontline battle. Supporter or healer is a player that lack on both attack and defense but has a necessary role in a party or team, they role is to ensure that DPS and tanker will not die in action by support them with buff to temporary enhance status of ability and heal the health point (HP), placed in the last row of frontline battle. Aside of the role of each class, *Dragon Nest* character has divided into two based on the hometown, these character have their own background stories to fight that shown in the beginning of the game.

Moreover, *Dragon Nest* has addictively gameplay and good story to attract the player. Similar like the other MMORPG, *Dragon Nest* has item mall and trading system. Firstly, item mall system is a game service that allows player to convert real life money into cherry credits and spent on items that provide by the company to enhance their avatar display and make it stronger at the same time by its additional status. Secondly, trading system is a basic system of MMORPG.

Trading is an activity of exchanging goods, craft item and even gold. There are two ways to do a trade.

There are direct trade and trading house system trade that

provides by the game through Non Player Character (NPC). The table below shows the hometowns of the character belongs to:

Town					
Prairie Town			Mana Ridge		
Starting Class	First Jobs Change	Second Jobs Change	Starting Class	First Jobs Change	Second Jobs Change
Warrior	Sword	Gladiator	Sorceress	Elemental	Saleana
	Master	Moonlord		Lord	Elestra
	Mercenary	Barbarian		Force User	Majesty
		Destroyer			Smasher
	Avenger	Dark Avenger		Paladin	Crusader
Archer	Bow Master	Sniper	Cleric		Guardian
		Artillery		Saint	
	Acrobat	Windwalker	Priest	Inquisitor	
		Tempest		Engineer	Shooting Star
		Kali			Screamer
Dancer	Summoner		Soul Eater	Alchemist	Adept
	Blade Dancer		Lancea	Piercer	Physician
Spirit Dancer	Flurry				
Assassin	Chaser	Ripper	Breezer	Sting	
		Raven			

	Bringer	Light Fury		
		Abyss Walker		

Table 2.2: Character's Hometown and Classes

In direct trade, players are exchanging stuff with the other player directly by choosing an option when they are facing each other. This option is allowing players to decide the perimeter of value themselves. Trading house system is a third party that provides a place for players to put goods, such as craft item and item mall to sell in gold or dragon coin. In addition, dragon coin is an item mall that converts cherry credits into exclusive game money.

Unlike gold, dragon coin has a limited function, it can buy item on trading house only. The values of the stuff are depending on the item's rarity and market demands. The players will get 10% of charge fee for each sold item. As described above, players can buy stuff whether it is item mall or selling item in trading house by real money in legitimate way.

2.4 Hero Classes

The feature of Role Play Game (RPG) is the providing to choose different classes in game as the representation and role of the players, in *Dragon Nest* especially, the used of avatar as the representation of player in game, required the player to choose eight different classes.

Basically the players have to make identity (id) to log in to *Dragon Nest*, for each id has provided by 24 slots of classes that players want to create. Each classes has their own story, hometown and combat style, players are free to

choose any classes they want. Therefore the players have the flexibility to change to any classes they want and have more than one classes.

2.4.1 Warrior

The warrior is quick on his feet and spear-heads the battle with up-close melee combat. Courageous and fuelled by a strong sense of justice, they were the first to rise to arms when the land of Veratheia was invaded by dragons. These fearless fighters make great companions, as they brawl their way to victory with unshakable determination and overwhelming strength.



Figure 2.2: warrior class (<http://dn.cherrycredits.com/>)

2.4.2 Archer

The nimble Archer takes down enemies with her powerful ranged attacks. Nothing escapes her wide vision and her bullseye accuracy spells instant death for all who oppose her. Fiercely loyal to her allies, Archers can be highly depended upon for support in battle as they launched the rain of arrows from the skies, painting destruction in their wake.



Figure 2.3: archer class (<http://dn.cherrycredits.com/>)

2.4.3 Cleric

The Cleric, with his strong defense, makes a fearsome opponent. Calmly holding his ground with shields and lightning spells, he is unfazed even when faced with mobs 10,000 strong. A versatile ally, he can also cast healing spells for their party, earning them extra points with any class.



Figure 2.4: cleric class (<http://dn.cherrycredits.com/>)

2.4.4 Sorceress

The Sorceress defeats her enemies with quick and powerful magic-based attacks. Hailed as the Queen of the Elements, this intellectual beauty can also cast spells to control her enemies' movements. A competent enchantress in any party, the Sorceress shows no mercy in the battlefield as she bends the elements to her will, bringing the bad guys swiftly to their knees.



Figure 2.5: sorceress class (<http://dn.cherrycredits.com/>)

2.4.5 Academic

The Academic is blessed with an arsenal of cutting edge technology at her fingertips which she uses liberally in the face of her adversaries. Armed with her deadly Cannon and powerful Bubble Gun as well as her trusty robot sidekick Alfredo by her side



Figure 2.6: academic class (<http://dn.cherrycredits.com/>)

2.4.6 Kali

Born under the Prophet's Shadow Star, Kali is destined to aid and guide the Prophet of Alteria. Her fate had been foretold long before her birth, and specialized battle knowledge had been passed down generations after generations to prepare Kali for her destiny. A spiritual fighter, Kali summons the power of spirits to aid her in battle and protect her allies. She exudes grace in the battlefield with her dance-like moves



Figure 2.7: kali class (<http://dn.cherrycredits.com/>)

2.4.7 Assassin

The Assassin crossed paths with a mysterious shadow-cloaked man who vanished inside him, and life was never the same ever since. On his journey to discover the truth, he has to face not only his own destiny, but the darkness within as well. The Assassin is the master of shadow, his speed and stealth allows him to take down his foes without a sound, and they will not realize it until they hit the ground.



Figure 2.8: assassin class (<http://dn.cherrycredits.com/>)

2.4.8 Lancea

Lancea is a burst of sunshine, all smiles and cheer for everyone. This girl is always ready to punish evil with her mighty spear. Years of rigorous training from the Brotherhood of Steel has prepared this beauty for any kind of battles. Her mastery with the spear is nothing short of formidable and she shows no mercy to anyone or anything who dare cross the line of justice.



Figure 2.9: lancea class (<http://dn.cherrycredits.com/>)

2.5 Classification of Players

There are three component of game that classified the players; achievement, social and immersion. These three components definitely become a goal for players. Bartle (1990) has identified and described the three components of player's goal including the subcomponent of each component on the table:

Achievement	Social	Immersion
Advancement Progress, Power, Accumulation, Status	Socializing Casual Chat, Helping Others, Making Friends	Discovery Exploration, Lore, Finding Hidden Things
Mechanics Numbers, Optimization, Templating, Analysis	Relationship Personal, Self-Disclosure, Find and Give Support	Role-Playing Story Line, Character History, Roles, Fantasy
Competition Challenging Others, Provocation, Domination	Teamwork Collaboration, Groups, Group Achievements	Customization Appearances, Accessories, Style, Color Schemes
		Escapism Relax, Escape from RL, Avoid RL Problems

Table 2.3: Three components of player's goal, according to Bartle, (1990). *Who Plays MUAs?*

The way of players to achieve the goals are different, especially for players who want to achieve advancement that takes effect the other components.

The first thing that will be achieved by players is power, status, accumulation and progress. In order to achieve them players are working hard. However, there is a shortcut to achieve it by pay the item malls. In *free-to-play* games, the games are free to download and play, but the developers and publishers are able to generate revenue through advertising and in-game sales. Item malls are selling an item that speed up the players to progress into a higher level, the stronger power, well-known status and accumulate in game resources. The usage of item malls are often called in game terms as *pay-to-win*. Players who do not use item malls can become stronger too, but it needs a hardworking and time to achieve it.

2.5.1 Cherry Credits

Cherry Credits (CC) is a payment media that uses to buy in game premium items. In order to get CC, players need to convert real money into virtual money through bank account, then transfers it to specify account that appointed by game's company to get in game credits to by item malls. The terms of virtual credits is different for each MMORPG, in *Dragon Nest* of South East Asian's server is called Cherry Credits, because game's publisher named *Cherry Credits de Games*, it is called in different terms on the other company. The purpose is same, the only thing that make it different is only the name's term.

2.6 Previous Studies

There are many studies related to simulation and hyper-reality have been conducted. As the previous study, there were two studies reviewed related to the study the researcher will conduct. First is thesis by Antonius Wisudarmoko (2010) entitled *Formation of Hyper-reality in Cyberspace Case Study: Three players in online game Perfect world*. In this study Antonius tried to explore the formation of hyper-reality on MMORPG called *Perfect World*.

Antonius's study uses qualitative methods. The source of his study was from MMORPG entitled *Perfect World*. Antonius uses himself as the instrument for the study he was conducted. In collecting the data, Antonius was collecting inside and outside of "cyberspace" with observations involved, where researcher followed individual in the online and offline to get a complete picture of the activities.

Antonius discovers and explain the reasons of hyper-reality in play, as the impact of hyper-reality addiction and identity conflicts in the real world with the world of PW, all based on perception and experiences online players by employing the theory of Semiotics proposed by Baudrillard.

The second is thesis by Wolfgang Sigogo Xemandros (2010) entitled *Hyper-reality on Advertising According to Jean Baurillard's Thought*. In this Study Wolfgang tried to explain the advertising content and the relation with semiotics especially on the hyper-reality according to Buadrillard thought.

Wolfgang's study uses qualitative methods. The source of his study was from *The Consumer Society, Simulacra and Simulation*. Wolfgang uses himself as the instrument of the study he was conducted. In collecting the data, Wolfgang was collecting the data through logic test to the reference books. The purposed of his study was to demonstrate Baudrillard's thought about hyper-reality in advertising that happens in society.

Wolfgang discover and explain the relation between hyper-reality in advertising. The semiotics relation is not only about the sign, but also the exchange of symbolic. The advertising no longer represent about a products but it opens the new space of symbolic relation according to the thought of Baudrillard.

Those study the researcher much better understanding of the concept of simulation and hyper-reality in many ways. Both studies have been investigated by using different object of the study. Based on description above, this studies has similarities to those previous studies. The similarity is to investigate and analyze simulation and hyper-reality used in video game. Moreover, the researcher can

assure that his thesis entitled “*The Mechanism of Simulation in MMORPG Dragon Nest*” has not been conducted by any other writers.

2.7 Research Methods

The research is conducted by qualitative methods to reveal the hidden messages through the signs and codes in the elements of game. Qualitative methods as the research procedure to produce a descriptive data in form of words.

The primary data used in this research is illustrations, texts, and colors as the elements of MMORPG *Dragon Nest*. The secondary data used in this research is reviews of the game on the official internet site. The data collection uses a documentation method. The writer uses *Dragon Nest* screenshots as document.

The subject in this research are illustrations, texts and colors that show signs and codes which change the exchange value.

The first step, the writer chooses MMORPG *Dragon Nest* as the object.

This game is appropriate to the study because it contains the representation of simulation and hyper-reality. The Second step, the writer will collect the data in form of screenshots. After that, the data will be classified according to the study conducted by the writer uses cultural studies theory. The third step, the writer will analyze the data that show values by gives it a structural descriptive and analysis of simulation according to Jean Baudrillard. The purpose is to shows the change of the value of exchange and substantial values in *Dragon Nest*. The fourth step, the writer will give a conclusion based on the finding that he found while conducting the research.