

## **REPRESENTATION OF ARABS IN VIDEO GAMES: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS**

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### **Abstract**

In a region full of crackdowns, Arab countries in the Middle East have found themselves in a competitive digital atmosphere. A variety of Arab-themed video-games began circulating on the Internet reflecting a number of social and political values which are sought to be investigated in the current research. The purpose of this paper is to carry out a critical discourse analysis of video games as a means of computer mediated communication. The research concentrates its scope on the games that represent Egyptians, Libyan, Syrians, and Arabs in the Gulf region. With a variety of genres, the Arab video-gaming industry is emerging attempting to exercise any form of media power over the people who play them. It is the mental, social, and ideological values in the Arab real-life, not the quality of the games that motivate the current research. That is, this study seeks to examine world views, cultural information and identities through the thematic representations and the moral values transmitted through the selected games. The current study provides a theoretical approach to video-games emphasizing the definition of the genres available; critical discourse analysis and multimodality are chosen as theoretical frameworks for the analysis of the communicative modes utilized in the games. The study highlights how linguistic choices are reflected in the mental, social and ideological representations of game elements.

**Keywords:** multimodality, critical discourse analysis; computer-mediated communication; ludology, game studies, identity; videogames; digital discourse

### **1 INTRODUCTION**

Modern studies explore Computer-mediated Communication (CMC) (Greiffenstern, 2010; Rodney, 2012; Scollon, 2014). CMC is regarded as the broader field that focuses on language and language use. Computer-mediated Discourse (CMD), on the other hand, is defined as "any mediation involved in carrying on common, everyday discourses" (Scollon, 2014, p.6). Such means of communication takes place between two or more participants where computer, or the like, is a medium of communication. Video games is one of the advances of modern technology and CMC which have paved the way to exchanging information and creating several types of discourses that construct our cultural beliefs, our power relations and our ideological backgrounds. In fact, "[n]o contemporary treatment of the relationship between discourse and

creativity would be complete without consideration of the impact of digital technologies on creative practices and creative products” (Rodney, 2012 p, 165).

## **2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Video gaming: a Ludic Discourse**

Video games are ludic activities defined as "a system in which players engage in an artificial conflict, defined by rules that result in a quantifiable outcome" (Salen & Zimmerman, 2003, p. 80). Video-gaming is a genre viewed as a medium of communication with embedded stories told and played in interactive forms where the player takes control of the whole elements. Martínez (2015) assimilates video games to narrative stories where “the contents, attitudes, values and beliefs transmitted by the media and video games are also similar” (Martínez et.al 2015, p.234).

Most gaming studies investigate the digital textuality relating their narrative concepts in the games’ cultural discourse (Bogost, 2008; Ryan, 2001; Martínez, 2015). Such studies focus on the components of the narrative structure that are present in game designs, namely, narrative-setting, character and action. Ryan (2001) describes such digital constituents,

Narrative representation consists of a world (setting) situated in time, populated by individuals (characters), who participate in actions and happenings (events, plot) and undergo change (p.28).

Other game studies regard computer games as texts or discourses (Mortensen 2001; Juul, 2001). According to these studies computer games are texts that are dependent on graphics and sound rather than on writing. Such multimodal dependence reflects the real life and is seen as loaded with ideological belief. Games, according to Salen & Zimmerman (2003), are simulations of real life they are “procedural representations of reality” (p. 457). Such representations are reproduced with sounds and visuals with attempts to emulate the world view of the players.

Such intended assimilation is conceptually presented for a main purpose, as Grimes & Feenberg (2009) argue, that is “the player focuses attention away from the undifferentiated action of everyday life toward a differentiated sphere of playful activity” (p.105).

The genre of video gaming is regarded as a mediated discourse having a number of characteristics. As described by Martinez et al (2015), video games have textual information, sounds, music, animations, photographs, etc. All of these characteristics, according to Martinez et. al., are processed enabling interactive communication between the character and the player. It is the role of game studies to explore how these elements integrate to form a whole communicative mode.

### **2.2 Video Game Studies**

Video gaming, as one of the concerns of CMC has rich literature of game-studies which are described as interdisciplinary in the sense that it recalls other fields and approaches to reveal the impact of these games on the surrounding contexts.

Zagal (2010) reviews three ways according to which video games are approached, namely, Social Scientific Approach, Humanities Approach, and Industry and Engineering Approach. These three approaches, according to Zagal, may blend together and the boundaries between them are blurred due to the newness of the field of game studies. What concerns the current paper is the humanities approach to video games. According to Zagal, ‘Humanities Approach’ studies the meaning and context of games. Such approach to game studies seeks to scrutinize the meanings made through game form and use. Bogost (2008) points to cultural and ideological units that constitute video games. According to Bogost video games are inseparable from the societal elements. “Videogames are thus subject to two equally strong forces opposing their uses as tools for social commentary, social change or other more ‘revolutionary’ matters” (p.117).

According to the humanities approach, researchers focus on “understanding videogames as cultural artifacts with embedded meaning, exploring what the medium of the videogame is, and situating it in context to other forms of human expression” (p. 16).

Game researchers are mostly interested in the moral values and socio-political implications (Aaron, 2007; Gabbiadini et.al, 2016). “In celebrating the accomplishments of video games, we should also scrutinize their more questionable ones” (Aaron, 2007, p.104). Video game studies focus also on the sociological

concussions resulting from violent video games. The literature of video games reviews the effect of violence on players. Diverse views about game violence are claimed

“...playing aggressive games would stimulate aggressive behaviors in players particularly because the player is an active participant.... On the other hand, catharsis theory ... implies that playing aggressive videogames would have the opposite effect by channeling latent aggression resulting in a positive effect on players” (Zagal, 2010, p.14).

Having such effects, games motivate researchers to investigate the surrounding contexts. Ludology is pertained with other fields and integrated with socio-cultural and political studies to explore the mutual effect of games on the players, and, in turn, real life. In other words, video gaming studies project societal behaviors which make them worth of study. “Often these interactions mirror communication in the physical world, and users often react to virtual situations in natural and social ways” (Gabbiani et.al, 2016 p.10).

It is the content of video games that represents a real influence on the surrounding context, be it situational or cultural contexts. Based on their contents, video games are exploited to transmit ideologies, develop values and reflect power relations in reality. “Video games are tools that enable the transmission of contents” (Martínez, 2015, p.230). Bogost (2007) reviews the various definition of ideology summarizing it as “Hidden procedural systems that drive social, political, or cultural behavior” (p.67).

The notion of ‘hegemony’, which is defined in different studies (van Dijk 1998; Gramsci, 1994; Gardiner, 1992), has also been summarized by Bogost as “the ability of stronger social classes to impose world view on subordinate ones” (p.69). Such notions, ideology and hegemony, are interrelated with video games. According to Bogost (2010), “Videogames are particularly useful tools for visualizing the logics that make up a worldview..., the ideological distortions in political situations..., at the state of such situations....” (p. 80). Bogost also argues, “video games carry political and ideological messages. Customary uses of language do have some places in videogame-based political messages” (p.99).

Thus, it is important to highlight the importance of video games as a tool to transmit concepts, beliefs and values (Bogost, 2010; Schwartz and Bilsky, 1987, 1990). That is, games can have a vital role in guiding and directing behaviors and attitudes to events. Due to their abstract representation, videogame studies have to be integrated in multidisciplinary studies.

## **2.3 CDA and Multimodality**

In this study an eclectic methodological framework is utilized. This framework draws its elements from Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and multimodality where social-cultural and political contexts integrate to provide a comprehensive analysis.

The concepts of multimodality are based on studies provided by Halliday (1978) and Kress and van Leeuwen (1996; 2001) where visual communication, music as well as verbal discourse form a comprehensive meaning making unit. Multimodality is concerned with decoding the various ‘modes’ of communication that are intended for transmitting numerous meanings. According to Kress (2009) multimodality is a set of modes where a single mode is ‘a socially and culturally shaped resource for meaning making’ (p. 79). Thus, the integration of both multimodality and CDA is critical in revealing meaning and examining in depth how power, ideologies are manifested through features other than single-mode discourse.

According to Halliday (1978), Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) is an approach that recalls studies such as film studies and media studies, to look for elements such as images, sounds, animations, gestures, etc. As a semiotic domain video games can benefit from the utilization of MCDA in game studies. Such metalinguistic elements are proposed to integrate with CDA to draw social semiotic implications.

According to O'Halloran et al. (2011), MCDA is a multifaceted approach of analysis that focuses on ‘denotational’ and ‘connotational’ readings of discourse. For O'Halloran et al. denotative process realizes the literal message of what is being depicted while connotational processes refer to the socio-cultural ideological ideas and values.

According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2001), connotation represents a “second layer of semiotic meaning construction” (p.96).

Two of the multimodal key features are gestures and sound track. Gesture is a multimodal feature that reflects identity and can signify values, social distance and ideology. Sound track on the other hand is a remarkable feature of multimodality and is useful tool for analyzing video games. Music, voiceovers and songs are regarded as discourses that reflect cultural and identity meanings and implications. Sound has to

be inevitably studied especially when they are integral element of video games. Such auditory elements represent a discourse by themselves. "Musical communication has also been examined under a sociolinguistic, pragmatic, and discursive perspective" (Veronesi and Pasquandrea, 2014, p.371).

Visual elements and their colors are also integral elements in MCDA in Wang's words, "In the visual semiosis, the potential of ideological encoding can be strengthened through the arrangement of colors and visual elements." (Wang, 2014, p.279)

### 3 OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESIS

The Arab video-gaming industry is emerging seeking to reinforce ideological frames as well as attempting to exercise any form of hegemonic power over their players. Specially chosen for the current study, action games with Arab-related themes are analysed. It is the ideological values loaded in the selected video-games, not the technical programming quality, that motivates the current research. The paper aims at studying their mental, social, and ideological influence of such video games.

The current study provides a multimodal critical discourse approach to video-games emphasizing their linguistic as well as their cultural manipulations. Regarded as a type of discourse, video games in the current article summons MCDA as a theoretical framework for the analysis of discursive practices manifested used in the selected games. The study analyses the thematic components of the games and highlights how the language used is reflected in the mental, social and ideological representations. To carry out the objectives of the study, the following hypothesis system has been defined:

1. Using different modes of representation, a video game serves as a medium for the socio-political and economic elucidation.
2. Video games are ideologically loaded and rhetorically motivated.
3. The representations elicited are shared by the thematic configuration as well as the linguistic choices in the game story.

The purpose of this paper is to carry out a Multimodal critical discourse analysis of Arab-developed video games. The research concentrates its scope on the study of action games representing Egyptians, Syrians, and Iraqis. To achieve its intent the paper seeks to answer the following Research questions:

- a. How can videogames reflect socially and politically motivated ideological messages?
- b. To what extent the main character represents the player?
- c. How are Arabs represented in the videogames?

### 4 METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of this study, the game is played multiple times and screen shots are taken, visual, auditory and verbal elements are decoded. The integration of these elements contributes to the intended ideological interpretations.

The data in the corpus consists of six video games downloaded from Google Play Store. Screen shots of the games are included with specific focus on critical element in the game. The selection criteria are based on a number of factors: (1) the number of downloads, (2) the thematic representation of Arabs, and (3) developer nationality. The games are classified according to the schematized country. The analysis is concern itself with auditory, visual and verbal representations which are then interpreted according to the values and ideological representations observed.

### 5 DATA ANALYSIS

For the analysis, we selected the video games developed by Arab designers and have Arab thematic content. The list of the analysed video games is show in table 1.

Table 1: Analysed Video Games

Title	Year	Developer	Downloads	Description
الاسطورة 'Al-Oustoura'	2016	Hazo Box (Egypt)	1153	Action game imitating a TV series carrying the same title.
اللمبي Al-Lemby	2016	Hazo Box (Egypt)	945	Action game having the same title of a famous Egyptian movie. Players should avoid police and

				collect coins
حماة الوطن 'Homeland Guardians'	2016	Alaa Moswi (Iraq)	1293	Players fight ISIS troops and avoid their deadly shots.
اركض عبودي اركض 'Run Abboudi Run'	2016	Huzayfa Saleh	1028	In Baghdad suburbs the player attempts to collect coins and avoid obstacles
اضرب بشار 'Multiple Bashar'	2015	Ammar Shahin	322	An Action game where players hit the drums when Bashar's head appears.
عشاق الحرية 'Freedom Lovers'	2012	Abdullah Dalal	7730	A game about the Syrian revolution where players kill the enemies before reaching their target

These games are especially selected because each game provides a set of attribute to an Arab country. Though the number of downloads may not resemble the massively downloaded non-Arabic designed games, it is still considered high if compared to other games developed by Arab programmers. The games are also chosen because the main character is Arab addressing Arab socio-political or cultural issues.

## 5.1 Egyptian Games

*Al-Oustoura 'The Legend'* is a video game developed after the TV show carrying the same name. The show represents a low-class male citizen graduated from the college of law seeking to join a judiciary career. Failing to have an appropriate job because of the bad reputation of his brother, Naser Desouky (the hero) is involved in a weapon business crime sentencing him to prison. The video game *Al-Oustoura* has the same thematic characterization. The character looks like the hero who tries to overcome the obstacles and collect as much rewards as he can. The game character attempts to kill who ever hinders his progress till the level is won. Once killed, the level begins again to reach the assigned destination.

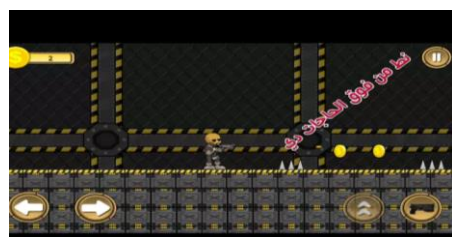
The game shows numerous linguistic utilizations represented in voiceovers in addition to run on commentaries. The phrase *Jump over these thingies* is a phrase written on the screen in the tutorials. The colloquial slang used in this phrase reflects the social standard of the character to describe the obstacles. On the death of the character and loosing the game a quoted audio commentary is played. The comment *الأعمار بيد الله* 'Lives are destined by God' is also a colloquial form recalling intertextuality. Such religion-related quote encourages the character to go through blatant risks. It is an emblem that substitutes the phrase 'you lost. Try again'.

Another linguistic example is *ارجع خد حقك* 'return to regain your rights'. The phrase instigates revenge and hostility feelings. It is also worth noting that all game options are displayed in colloquial Arabic for instance, *ارجع للقائمة* and not *ارجع للقائمة*. The exploitation of slang is intended to maintain power relations and minimize distance between the TV show's hero, the character and they real player.



Shot 1: Colloquial and idiomatic references

The player is contextualized as an outlaw who is fighting police officers. The target of the player is to overcome the forces of good, it is when this happens the player is rewarded with a lot of coins (outcome) that can be exchanged with more developed weapons. Using earned coins, the player also has the choice to shift between characters where customized clothing changes the character to his crime twin.



Shot 2: Obstacles faced and rewards earned

The game reinforces immoral strength supporting both internal and external evils. Such manifestations reflect the urge to overcome the social conditions and poverty and social inequality through violence and crime.

Another video game is *El-Lemby* which is named after a movie character named El-Lemby. The movie character is intensely criticized for its immoral thematic content. The hero is a homeless miscreant who seeks to spread his values and attitudes to a wide range of audience. The comic elucidation of the character is intended to reinforce the sentimental empathy with the character. The player is embodied in an Egyptian perpetrator who attacks the police while collecting money (reward). The collected money resembles the Egyptian Pound in form. The game depicts the Egyptian economic situation as poor and that people gain materialistic rewards only if they manipulate with force of good (the police car). To win the game players attempt to collect as much rewards as you can.



**Shot 3- El Lemby Game Play**

The game opens with a street song whose lyrics blame the society for the poor conditions and dire interpersonal relations. The genre of street songs is utilized as a means of societal representation (El-Falaky, 2015). Such integration between street songs and video games, as is the case in EL-Lemby, reflects a collapse of societal textures where the traditional norms of society are distorted.



**Shot 4- El-Lemby (Rewards and Obstacles)**

Through these two games, the Egyptian society is represented through a set of underscores determined by the occupation and the educational as well as the socio-economic class of the game characters. Such characters level up only when they defeat the forces of good and earn a lot of materialistic rewards, namely, the Egyptian pound. In both games the mental representations of the character is presented through the background street songs, the textual commentaries and the auditory elements through out all the phases of the games. In the two games, the players' default enemy is police and regulations. Physical attacks are the only way to win and collect the rewards. The two games are composed of heterogeneous constituents that symbolically reflect the ideological background of the game designer. It is only violence and the forces of evil that rule. Through this pair of discourses and the utilization of metaphor of criminal behavior as moral depravity, Egyptians are portrayed as social victims where physical violence and immoral pursue of money is the only way to compensate such society inequality.

## 5.2 Iraqi Games

Iraqi-developed games are exemplified in two games, *Homeland Guardians* 'حماة الوطن' and *Run Abboudi Run* 'اركض عبودي اركض'. The two games differ in theme and structure, yet each one reflects a significant communicative message. *Homeland Guardians* is a military-themed game which is structured on war, terrorism and ideologically-driven conflicts. The game reflects the deep hatred to the invasion of a terroristic organization in Iraq. Islamic State in Syria and Iraq (ISIS) is a terroristic group that has fanatic religious ideologies claiming their intention to regain the Islamic Caliphates. Identifying themselves brutally, ISIS brags of slaughtering its enemies regardless of their religions. Muslims, Christians, or Jews, ISIS members take revenge of who ever oppose its ideological proclaims.

The game begins with verbal rhetoric represented in a verbal contextualization of the players' actions.



Shot 5 - Homeland Guardians (opening screen)

The opening screen of the game comprises a number of characters dressed differently. Different forms of characters reflect the variation of conflicting parties having different ideological beliefs. The Iraqi flag is an 'icon' symbolizing patriotism seeking to minimize the distance between the game elements and the players.

The opening screen also employs verbal elements where the opening text announces the motivation of the game.

- قام تنظيم داعش الارهابي بالسيطرة على عدد من المناطق و بدأ بقتل ابناءها و سبي نساءها و سرقه ممتلكاتها  
*ISIS begins with controlling a number of regions killing their citizens, captivating their women and stealing their possessions.*

Verbally, ISIS is brutally described through the violent actions represented in a number of nominals, such as 'controlling', 'killing', 'captivating' and 'stealing'. Such nominalization process enables generalization and implies continuity of their brutal behavior. Encouraging the players and justifying this digital violence, another rhetorical manifestation is presented in:

- لذلك هب ابناء العراق الغياري بمكوناتهم للتصدي لهذا التنظيم الخبيث فكتبوا اروع الاساطير التي سوف يخلدها التاريخ.  
*That is why loving Iraqis with all their components protested to face this malignant organization so they wrote the best legends that will be immortalized by history*

This opening sentence is loaded by a number of illocutionary forces. Iraqis are ideologically portrayed as 'brave and unified' despite their multi-racial identities. This opening text is accompanied by a patriotic song where the ideologies of power and nationalism are acoustically presented. This can be exemplified in its vocabulary such as 'people', 'undefeated', 'believe in', 'endurance', and 'triumphant', as seen in the following part of the lyrics.

- نحن شعب لا نهزم  
*We are undefeated.*
- في كل عام لو مضى نزداد عزما و رضا بالشعب و الثورة  
*Every passing year we believe in endurance and satisfaction with people and the revolutions.*
- منصورون انا و صامدون و كنا و ثابتون  
*We were and still are triumphant, steadfast and consistent*

Interestingly the opening rhetoric and the lyrics of the song are written in first person plural pronoun. This linguistic repertoire reflects that all the Iraqi people are unified and included in the same mission. This is represented in the pronouns 'نحن' 'we' and the prefix 'نـ' and the suffixes 'نا' 'our'. This rhetorical employment invites the players to save Iraq from the forces of evil through weapons and military force to regain his occupied land. Such pronominal references make it clear that the game reflects ideological reference manifested in the US versus THEM.





**Shot 6 Homeland Guardians (game play)**

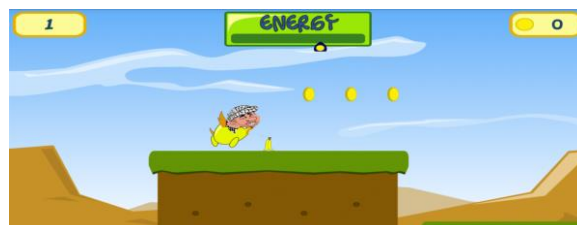
Screen shot (6) shows how the game utilizes graphics to symbolize the Iraqi stolen resources. An oil well and petrol machinery represent stolen wealth that needs defending troops. On the other hand, military fences represent barrier between conflicting troops. The player is characterized in an Iraqi soldier who, all through the game, looking for ISIS members to kill. Players level up after killing the displayed number of enemies.

The second Iraqi game selected for this study is *اركض عبودي اركض* 'Run Abboudi Run'. Through this runner game, the player is an Iraqi dressed character popping out of the shell of a broken egg. Framed as a chick the player, Abboudi, seeks to collect as much coins as he can. In a desert background, where the sand brown colour prevails, Iraq is portrayed as a primitive deserted land with no buildings and institutions.



**Shot 7 - Abboudi Opening Screen**

Through out the game a monotonous music is played and players retry their attempts if they are trapped in the ground obstacles.



**Shot 8- Abboudi (Rewards and Obstacles)**

During the game the obstacle is a banana (shot 8). This meek obstacle is capable of hindering the money seeking character that is portrayed as an idiot chick. Dressed in a chicken form the character is jumping with a smile on the face which conveys a sense of energy and fun. The character of the player in the game may represent the Iraqi people slipping through the socio-political obstructions. He is represented as a coward materialistic character and such presentation is legitimized as common sense. The head cover is also an 'icon' of identity.

### 5.3 Syrian Games

Like the Republic of Iraq, Syria is exposed to brutal terroristic attacks from ISIS in addition to a political conflict between the regime and opposing political troops. Through two selected games, Syrians are represented as fighting both terrorism and religion-driven conflicts. The first game is *اضررب بشار و براميله المتفجرة* 'Smash Bashar and his Exploding Barrels'. As the name of the game suggests, the enemy is the state president who symbolizes the regime. Bashar El-Asad is portrayed as killer of the Syrian people.

The verbal manifestation of the third person pronoun 'his' implies that El-Asad intends to intentionally kill the innocents. To win this action game, the player has to over score his previous achievement hitting the barrel out of which the head of president appears.





**Shot 9-Opening Screen**

Shot 9 includes a number of denotations for instance, a clear sky with blue background which connotes calm and tranquility atmosphere. Another denotation is the barrel which is flag-colored connoting the Syrian possessions of wealth and prosperity. The image of El-Asad is confined to the head. The head here represents malevolence which has to be smashed in order to regain you lost country.



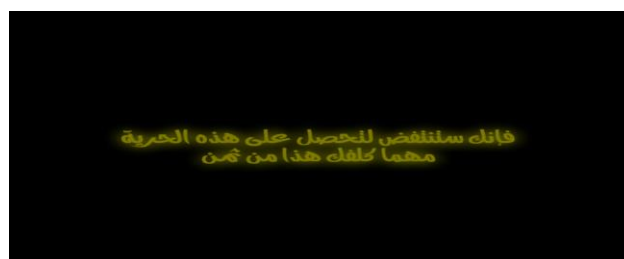
**Shot 10- Bashar's Game Play**

Shot 10 is the screen of the game where a set of barrels are ready for the player to smash the target's head. The connotation of El-Asad single poses can be understood in his eye gaze and his sad look. In terms of gaze Al-Asad shows social distance conveying that he is an unapproachable target. EL Asad's head implies that he is a unit not an individual.

The comic portrayal of the head gives the sense of non-conformity. A sense of apprehension is implied from El Asad's facial expression which may revive the sense of winning.

The action process of smashing the head connotes smashing the source of evil. Again, the colour saturation of the flag appears on the barrels while the background is red brown giving the feeling and perception of fire and flame. Washed out in the background skulls spread all through the screen which signifies that the target is approachable and can easily be defeated.

The second game is 'عشاق الحرية' (Freedom Lovers). In the game, the player uses weapons, and military forces to overcome the enemy. The game mounts its argument through verbal, audio and visual rhetoric. The verbal rhetoric is characterized by both first and second person pronominal references where the player is directly addressed. Such linguistic technique is used to maintain relations with the content with the game (See shot 11).



**Shot 11- Freedom Lover (Verbal Opening)**

Verbally, the opening screen addresses the players or the prospective players:

• عندما نخرج و نطالب بالحريه الضائعه منذ سنين فإنك تجد من يحشد لك قوته و يجهز الياته القتاكه فإنك ستنتفض لتحصل على هذه الحريه مهما كلفك هذا من ثمن.

• When we go out and call for lost freedom, you find you find those who muster their strength and deadly mechanisms; hence you will upraise to regain this freedom no matter what price this costs you.

Such verbal deployment connotes how precious freedom is. Freedom is attributed as 'valuable', 'lost' and 'has to be seized'. Enemies, on the other hand, are described as 'brutal', 'strong' and 'wreathless'. Using the verbal manifestation of 'US versus Them' references the game recall the ideology square of the 'GOOD US' and the 'BAD THEM'. The pronouns 'we' are predicated with verbs such as 'call for freedom' and 'upraise', while 'they' are the source of evil which 'muster the deadly mechanism' to regain the 'lost freedom'.

The game employs auditory elements where an enthusiastic song commences with the game and continues in the background. The song bears positive emotive feelings supporting the claimed peaceful revolution and supporting the Syrian military forces to regain peace in the country. Both the verbal uses in the opening text and lyrics comprise ideologically motivated vocabulary such as *ابناء الدين* 'religion sons' and *رض اجدادي* 'my ancestor's land'.

The 'option screen' of the game is divided into small blocks named after the cities of Syria. Each city represents a game location. The player's task is to shoot the enemies to level up to free as much cities as he can.



Shot 12 – Freedom Lovers (option screen)

As illustrated in shot 12, the green color of the text reflects peace and marks victory as opposed to the red color which marks losing the attempt. Armed with weapons, the player must scan and point his weapon to attacking troops. The game begins with a stand still image where the Syrian flag is placed on the top of a building you are supposed to save and where the name of the city heads a building (see shot13). Like Iraqi games, the Syrian-themed is graphically depicted as a desert land. The game seems to reinforce the ideological frame of vigilance as safeguards.



Shot 13 – Freedom Lovers (Play Screen)

The two Syrian-themed games connote real world conflicts which are reflected in the political unrest taking place in Syria.

## 6 CONCLUSION

The analysis of the games reveals the intentionality of the representations elicited. Analysed videogames seek to reinforce a number of beliefs rooted in the mind of the game designers who know that they will appeal to the players' mental perceptions. The selected games represent a sample of wide range of digital game industry that reflect real-world events such as Socio-economic problems as is the case in the Egyptian games, political conflicts as the case with war-themed games in Syria and Iraq. The discourse of video games, though it is still in its prime stage, attempts to reinforce the feeling of empathy for the displayed problematic conflicts connoting a call of distress or a portal to express their feelings.

Arab-themed games seek to convey a number of positive as well as negative values. Some Arab designed games promote unconstructive values framing the Arabs as materialistic, violent and chaotic people (as in Al-Oustoura, EL-Lemby and Abboudy games). Such implicative values are strengthened by the social

contexts which are reflected in the character of the games (vulgar, uneducated, coward, and outlaw). Be it true or false, these games suggest their representation of reality and acts.

On the other hand, other games support positive values of regain in g your rights, defeating terrorism and standing for your country. These values are reflected through games such as 'Freedom Lovers' and 'Homeland Guardians'. In fact, video games are responsible for the reflection of the ideological beliefs of both the game designer and the players. The designer of the games intended to direct the players and their behaviors towards certain values and attitudes.

Through the Multimodal analysis carried out, it can be assured that there is an intrinsic link between socio-political representations of Arabs and Arab-themed video games. Through symbolic icons (eg. flag, president head, police car, etc.) hidden beliefs and ideas are expressed. The multi modal discourse analysis also spotted the light on the role of the auditory element in games. In the case of the Egyptian games, the Street songs played in the background reflect the socio-economic meanings and implications. On the other hand, the background enthusiastic song serves to connect all of the levels and create a narrative atmosphere about the political crisis happening in countries such as Iraq and Syria. The fast tempo and enthusiastic lyrics in such songs reflect the ideology of nationalism seeking to strengthen it in the hearts and minds of the players. Such auditory features help to draw the attention of the player and make him/her a member in the storyline of the game.

Colors, whether back ground or game items, are imitating real life images such as the color of the flags, the color of the cars and the color of lands. Imitating reality is also integral goal in games where the skin color of real characters (as is the case with El-Lemby and El Oustoura, El Asad), real Egyptian pounds, and real logos in war-themed games. It is critical to highlight the importance of analyzing the verbal, visual and auditory features of video games because these digital products are not arbitrarily designed. Rather, the study reveals that these digital discourses are responsible and have the consequence in stereotyping Arabs and it is the role of such studies to decode the ideologies within such Audio visual and verbal semiosis. In fact, in game studies, the game is not over.

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