



Language, Gender, and Videogames: Using Corpora to Analyse the Representation of Gender in Fantasy Videogames

(Book Review)

Nilüfer Erdur^{a*}

^a Independent Researcher, MA Student, Turkey; <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1429-6725>

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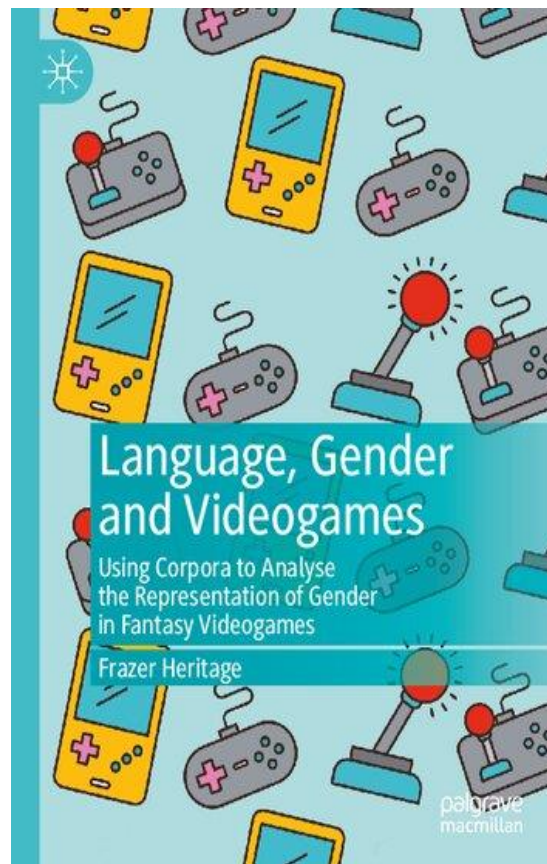
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Book Review

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* Nilüfer Erdur. MA student, Turkey.
e-mail address: nilufererdur03@gmail.com

Introduction

The book reviewed here is an entry-level guide that introduces corpus analysis methods to those who are interested in corpus studies and want to learn about gender representations in video games and who are already doing corpus studies. While corpus refers to the linguistic data collected and compiled from real life, corpus analysis refers to the statistical operations performed to detect and examine specific language patterns embedded in this data (McEnery & Hardie, 2011; Baker, 2014). The corpus analysis method is used in examining ideological issues such as politics, racism, and gender representations, which cannot be seen on the surface.

Although video games have mainly visual and auditory content, they are also linguistically rich, as they contain instructions and dialogues. However, as the author also states in his book, there is not much linguistic analysis about gender representations in video games, apart from content, that is, visual analysis. In this book, the author introduced the corpus analysis methods and video games and talked about the studies in which he applied different corpus analysis methods.

The book consists of 8 chapters in total. While the first chapter briefly summarizes the book and the topics covered. The other three chapters introduce the history of video games, the structures of video games, gender representation theories and various corpus analysis methods. The 5th, 6th, and 7th chapters demonstrate the theoretical foundations and analysis methods mentioned earlier by the author in a detailed and step-by-step manner from three separate studies in which he has practised. In the last chapter, what was mentioned in the previous chapters is briefly summarized, and suggestions are made for future research.

Chapters

Chapter 1, “**Introduction**”, briefly mentions how the author met with video games, and tells the history of video games from 3000 BC until today. It touches on the mechanical and linguistic developments in video games and how language is formed in different video games and player communities. Then, briefly explaining that gender came to the fore with the existence of characters in video games, it examines the Cultivation Theory, which explains how digital products such as movies and video games affect individuals with harmful ideologies on gender and presents studies on this theory and video games.

Chapter 2, “**Language, Gender, and Video Games**”, presents various definitions of gender and evaluates studies on language, gender and video games. In the light of gender studies, the author discusses whether the concepts of sex and gender are biologically attained or socially constructed while explaining the differences between them. He then approaches gender from a linguistic perspective and presents the views on why different genders use the same language in diverse ways. In the Gender performativity section, different gender roles, the sources of these roles, and how specific language patterns reflect the gender representation are discussed. Finally, he argues that corpus studies on gender representations on video games paratexts, texts formed in non-game contexts such as forums and websites, and within game texts are insufficient in terms of number and method.

Chapter 3, “**Corpus Approaches to Ludolinguistics**”, provides the definition of corpus and information on different corpus analysis methods, and how they are used. The author first emphasizes the importance of corpus studies by explaining the differences between armchair and corpus linguistics. Then, by moving on from the differences between general and specialized corpus, he explains which corpus can be used in what kind of study, how they can be created and how these corpora can be analysed. The author also briefly defines keywords analysis, collocational analysis and concordance line analysis and lists the

studies that utilized them. Finally, albeit limited, he presents video game studies with the aforementioned methods.

Chapter 4, “**Building a Corpus of Language from Videogames**”, shows how to create a special corpus from video games. It divides language into “game paratext” and “within video games” and offers different data collection and storage techniques for each. It emphasizes complex issues such as how to collect data by playing the game many times (especially for games with multiple routes and endings), how to clean junk words in texts extracted from video game files, and accuracy of fan transcriptions.

Chapter 5, “**Gender in a General Corpus of Videogames**”, presents one of the studies of the author. However, the author demonstrates them as if they are step-by-step manuals rather than articles published in a journal. The study in this chapter deals with the corpus collected from 10 AAA quality video games (video games that are developed for consoles and advanced computers). The author shows how the keyword, collocation and concordance lines analyses are done by centring the “he” and “she” pronouns and “man” and “woman nouns” in the corpus-assisted method. It also presents in detail how both genders are represented in video games by comparing the data obtained in the study with previous studies.

Chapter 6, “**Gendered Language in The Witcher Videogame Series**”, mentions another study, which was handled with the corpus-driven method, and examines gender representation and ideologies in The Witcher games. After giving brief information about The Witcher series, the author demonstrates how he extracted linguistic data from game files. This time, instead of predetermined variables (pronouns and nouns), he identifies linguistic patterns from keyword analysis. The resulting keywords are analysed within the context by separating them according to the genders and gender roles they imply. The study results reveal how each gender is represented in negative or positive terms.

Chapter 7, “**Gendered Character Speech in World of Warcraft**”, discusses a new study conducted differently from other studies. By looking at the male and female characters separately, what they do, what kind of conversations they are involved in, the language they use, and the things they speak about are examined. For this reason, the author once again sets out from previous studies on these subjects. Then, he briefly introduces the World of Warcraft game and gives information about how he collects data and creates and edits the corpus, just like he did in the studies in other chapters. It groups NPCs (non-playable characters) with different in-game roles (quest giver/receiver) and uses their dialogues to create sub-corpora. Then, each sub-group and gender is analysed in terms of semantics, and the author presents the gender representation that appears in WoW.

Chapter 8, “**Conclusion**”, gives a summary of the previous, and mentions the book's limitations. The author also discusses why it is difficult to do corpus studies on video games and makes suggestions for future research.

Evaluation

This book, a brief introduction to video games and corpus studies, presents all the information required to learn both video game structures and corpus analysis methods in a compact and detailed way. Although some topics are repeated more than necessary, the book has a narrative style that can be easily understood by those who are interested in video games and individuals who are not accustomed to corpus studies. In particular, the detailed chapters in which the author presents his studies enable readers to understand and make sense of the theoretical knowledge. The book's layout also offers a comfortable and fast experience in terms of reading. Especially, in the e-book version, the references can be followed easily thanks to the embedded links. It can be useful as the most basic and beginner-level book for anyone interested in video games and corpus studies.

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