Chapter 6
Players Retell This Story: A Critical Analysis of AI, Storytelling, and Meaning-Making Processes in Rimworld

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores what kind of language and discourse players use in their Rimworld retellings, how they interpret the story elements provided by Rimworld AIs, whether there is a particular common trend in players' retellings, and whether player-generated narratives exhibit ethically controversial features. Using critical discourse analysis, the study analyzed retelling videos posted on YouTube based on gameplay experiences shaped by an AI narrator. The findings show that players tend to resort to racist, sexist and culturally controversial discourses in their retellings, using humor as a means to mask these discourses. The study reveals how the AI narrator affects the actors' signification processes and the potential for ethically controversial consequences of these processes.

DOI: 10.4018/979-8-3693-7235-7.ch006

INTRODUCTION

The use of AI technologies in games is quite old and has gone through various phases throughout history, attracting the attention of different disciplines in different time periods. The biggest breakthroughs have occurred closer to the present day (Yannakakis & Togelius, 2015).

It is seen that the application of AI to games has become widespread after the 2000s, information sharing and access to this information have become easier in this period, and these applications were kept a secret before (Millington, 2006). This spread led to the development of advanced AI models in games and made increasingly realistic simulations possible. Having an artificial intelligence behind the game as an opponent that responds to the player's inputs and can make strategic moves has become an ideal tool for optimizing difficulty levels. This situation has also increased the importance of player decisions and opened a performative space for players. Thus, the player has greater identification with the avatar he/she controls and takes a more active part in the action. However, it is technologically new, and the ethical problems it brings with it are still controversial and alive. The time required between the speed at which technology spreads to society and the ethical and philosophical discussion and resolution of it shows that we are far behind when it comes to artificial intelligence. Neither end-users nor governments are adequately prepared for how data is collected, processed, and served.

The importance of AI for games is quite high. As new AI models develop, it can be predicted that AI will take on bigger roles in the future, not only functioning as a game master in games, but also in design, coding, and quality assurance. Especially for industry, it seems possible to manage complex processes by utilizing different AI models with much lower budgets. For example, in a comparative study of the situation where a classical game studio and an independent designer imitated the different talent pools of a team by utilizing different AI models, it was observed that AI models made progress in the design process quite quickly and facilitated the work of designers, compensating for the communicative losses that may occur in the production process in a classical studio (Lee et al., 2023). It is almost certain that with the production of more advanced AI models, this process will take place much faster, and many manufacturers will choose this path. However, since it is not known how these models are trained with data and which datasets are used, these models can be easily affected from the outside. This situation becomes even more important and sensitive when it comes to generative AI.

At the same time, this also implies that the existing negative human characteristics can be uncontrollably activated at the same rate. Algorithms created specifically for individuals and fed with the information of individuals can turn into unethical products as an output. Especially the fact that the age range of the player audience