



Decoding Non-Binary Identity Expression in VALORANT: A Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis of Agent ‘Clove’ Across Trailer and Corresponding Article

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Abstract. Inclusivity in online video games can be very crucial to create a safe environment for everyone. A game developer, Riot Games, in this case, created a character in one of their games, VALORANT, called Clove, which is introduced as a non-binary character. This research discusses about the way Riot Games tried to introduce a queer/non-binary agent in a binary-expected circumstances. The objectives of this research are to reveal Clove’s gender identity expressed visually and textually, and to demonstrate the contribution Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis in understanding language and identity in the gaming industry. The analysis comes from 6 selected scenes with 6 screenshots captured from VALORANT YouTube Channel, titled 2 WORLDS // Clove Agent Trailer – VALORANT, in which contain non-binary key moments. The findings show that visually, non-binary identity is shown implicitly through camera angles and colors combination most often. While textually, taken from the trailer’s background music’s lyrics and Riot Games’ article titled Clove: Death is Only the Beginning, shows that through idioms, colloquial slang, and metaphors, the lyrics and article conveyed meaning both implicit and explicit that represents non-binary experiences in a binary world. Overall, this research shows how the trailer subtly introduces non-binary identity to the gaming community.

Keywords: Clove, Game Trailer, Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA), Non-Binary Gender, Valorant

1 Introduction

1.1 The Background of the Study

The rise of digital technology has transformed online games into multifaceted platforms that encompass entertainment, social engagement, and competitive play. Online games can be referred to as video games that are played with a computer network and usually requires multiple players to play in a game [13]. Online games have various purposes, such as providing entertainment, creating a whole environment for social interactions, and even creating a competitive play for professionals. The gaming industry has

attracted the global audience through its events especially in esports competition which generates substantial revenue for the company.

Online gaming has existed for several decades. [25] said that some early bird games such as Centipede, Space Invaders, Pac Man, and Donkey Kong were first introduced and became popular in the 1980s. As time went by, previously known games, which were single-player games, evolved to games where the player could experience a virtual world that allowed the players to customise their characters, create a new server, and even specify the equipment the players wanted [25]. Online games have evolved more into a community itself rather than just a thing where gamers play the game.

Online games consist of variety of genres and sub-genres. [12] stated that there are at least 10 types of online games: Sandbox, Real-time Strategy (RTS), Shooters (FPS and TPS), Multiplayer Online Battle Arena (MOBA), Role-playing (RPG, ARPG, and more), Simulation and sports, Puzzles, Action-adventure, Survival and horror, and Platformer. One of the well-known games is FPS (First-person Shooter), which essentially presents a point of view of what the character sees in game. FPS offers a gameplay where the players experience the action of gun fighting and other machinery combat directly through the perspective of the character. VALORANT is one of FPS games that uses the first-person perspective in the game.

VALORANT is a 5v5 game matchup where weapons meet incredible abilities to either detonate/defuse the Spike or eliminate the enemy team [15]. In a 5v5 format, two teams consisting of five players competing against one another, with each player assuming a specific role or agent to contribute strategically to their team's success. Matches are typically structured around attacking and defending rounds, where the attacking team aims to plant the Spike (a device similar to bomb) while the defending team must prevent the plant or defuse the Spike if it is planted. Victory can also be achieved by eliminating all players of the opposing team within a round. In the game, the character is called agent. Up until March 10th, 2025, there are 26 agents in the game, in which divided by 4 roles: Duellist, Initiator, Sentinel, and Controller. Duellist has the ability to engage with the enemies first, attacking them with aggressive plays. Initiator, they interfere the enemies' flow and help the team open sites. Sentinel, holding territories, preventing enemies from going to a certain location. Finally, Controller helps the team to control certain area, blocking enemies view [15].

VALORANT uses video trailers to promote its newly released agents to introduce their backgrounds, abilities, and their role within the game. Hamel (2012) in [21] studies two trends of a trailer: the use of 'the propaganda film' which provide images to the public and 'commercial film' that serve 'products such as soap, concrete, clothing, chocolate, and firearms'. In VALORANT, these trailers are used to engage the players about the upcoming agents released which could make them consider playing the character in the game. Recently, Riot Games has released a new Controller agent based in Scotland, named Clove. Riot Games took steps toward inclusivity by introducing this new agent as a non-binary agent. Through this agent release, Riot Games is trying to represent the company's inclusivity by welcoming different gender identities within the game.

Game publishers such as Riot Games have made public commitments to representation and equity, as seen in their inclusion characters 'Clove', who is explicitly non-

binary [15]. They are now actively integrating inclusive narratives and character development to reflect the diversity of their players. This makes Clove a valuable object of study to examine how inclusivity is introduced through its trailer within multimodal means.

“Non-binary” appears as a term for people whose identity does not represent male or female; in which they might or might not experience both, or someone who does not want to be identified as one whatsoever [9] in [10]. Many non-binary individuals choose to use gender-neutral pronouns, such as they/them/their in singular form, or alternatives like zie/hir/hirs, xe/xem/xyr, and ey/em/eir. Others may prefer a mix of pronouns or opt to avoid pronouns altogether, instead using their name in place of any pronoun [9]. In this case, VALORANT addresses this issue to welcome non-binary people by adding an agent which has the non-binary identity. To support this representation, VALORANT collaborated with non-binary artist MADGE, who contributed the song featured in Clove’s trailer to help amplify the agent’s identity and message. To support this representation, VALORANT collaborated with non-binary artist MADGE, who contributed the song featured in Clove’s trailer to help amplify the agent’s identity and message. Therefore, this research focuses on discussing how the Clove’s trailer introduces their identity to the audience. This research analyses ‘Clove’ agent trailer including examining multimodal elements through visual and textual to understand how the trailer and article convey the character’s gender identity and role within the game.

The objectives of this study are:

- a. To analyse how gender identity is expressed (visually and linguistically) by the character Clove in the VALORANT agent trailer and related article, drawing upon Kress & van Leeuwen’s Visual Grammar and van Dijk’s Critical Discourse Analysis
- b. To demonstrate the contribution of multimodal critical discourse analysis in understanding language use and identity construction in digital media contexts, especially gaming industry

1.2 Literature Review

Multimodal analysis is an exciting and interdisciplinary domain that combines elements of visual design, auditorial, and textual on how materials shape the gaming experience. Researcher is continually pushing the boundaries of analysis methodologies in order to uncover the secrets behind Riot Games’ intention to introduce a non-binary agent to the community.

A paper by [14] titled “Self Expression Lyrics of Yura Yunita’s Song Tenang: Van Dijk’s Critical Discourse”

[5] in their paper titled “Educational Guidelines on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics Biases in Medical Education”

A dissertation by [2] titled “Video Game Trailers: How Storytelling is Used to Create Identification and Appeal with Audiences”

[24] in their paper titled “Multimodal Discourse Analysis on A Cartoon Film Trailer Up”

A paper by [7] titled “Mediating Electronic Dangerscapes: A Multimodal Analysis of a State-sponsored Newspaper Warning Advertisement in Nigeria”

[1] in their paper titled “Critical discourse analysis of the bombing attack news: an analysis of Teun A. van Dijk’s model”

A paper by [4] titled “Games, films and media literacy: Frameworks for multimodal analysis”

[11] in their paper entitled “Introduction: Queer Linguistic approaches to discourse”

2 Methods

2.1 Theoretical Framework

Multimodal Discourse Analysis

Multimodal Discourse Analysis, developed by Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen, provides a theoretical framework for the study of communication in the present world of multimedia. They argue that language is only one of several resources for creating meaning. Modes are defined by the authors as “semiotic resources that allow the simultaneous realisation of discourses and types of (inter)action.” Music, language, and visuals are examples of modes discussed by the authors. Media, on the other hand, is defined as the material resources used in production.

There are four key theoretical assumptions that form the basis of multimodality. First, language is just one part of a broader multimodal ensemble, where communication and representation always involve multiple modes, each capable of contributing equally to meaning. These ensembles perform different communicative functions. Second, multimodality holds that, such as language, all modes have been shaped by cultural, historical, and social practices to fulfil specific social roles. Third, individuals actively create meaning by selecting and arranging various modes. Lastly, the meanings of signs created from multimodal resources are inherently social, much like spoken language.

Critical Discourse Analysis

[18] outlines a discourse analysis model consisting of macrostructure and microstructure, which cover aspects such as semantics, syntax, stylistics, and rhetoric while also considering social cognition and context. [14] elaborates that the macrostructure examines the themes within a discourse, focusing on subject elements that are topically connected to the main core of the text or the object under discussion. The microstructure includes the smaller components within discourse, encompassing aspects of semantics, stylistics, syntax, and rhetoric. Social cognition involves the author’s way of perceiving or understanding an event, which is then expressed through discourse or writing. Meanwhile, social context explains how discourse is received and evolves within society.

[18] in [6] grouped text based on several levels into three levels: macrostructure (refers to the overall meaning of a text, not only the general but also specific segments of an event), superstructure (relates to the organisational framework of a text, describes how the discourse’s structure and various components are systemically arranged within

the text), and microstructure (relates to the detailed meaning within the discourse, which can be examined by analysing linguistic elements such as word choice, propositions, sentences, and paraphrases).

Visual Grammar Theory

Visual grammar, developed by [8], is a framework designed to analyse how visual components convey meaning, like how linguistic grammar organises sentence structure. It examines features such as layout, colour, perspective, and salience within images. This framework enables researchers to systematically explore how visual texts are constructed to communicate meaning. They explain that images can communicate meaning in three main ways: representational meaning, interactive meaning, and compositional meaning.

Representational meaning focuses on what is shown in the image. It may include people, objects, and actions. There are two main types of representational meaning: narrative and conceptual. Narrative, where the image tells a story or shows an action. Narrative images can show participants (whether human or non-human) engaging in actions, reactions, verbal interactions, or mental activities (with mental activities often represented using ‘thought clouds’) (Unsworth and Ortigas, 2008).

Interactive meaning is about the relationship between the image and the person looking at it. It asks how the image tries to make the viewers feel or react. Interactive meaning involves the social relationships among the represented participants (people or objects shown in the images), the viewers (those who observe the images), and the image producer (such as the designer or photographer) [17].

Compositional meaning looks at how different parts of the image are arranged. The position of elements helps create meaning. The meaning of composition is conveyed in three aspects: information value, scene selection, and significance [3].

2.2 Methods

The instruments are the Clove’s Agent Trailer, along with its official article. I use these instruments to conduct the analysis. The analysis takes place after all the necessary data (trailers and article) have been collected. These instruments are used to understand how meaning is made in the trailer through a multimodal lens. The trailer and article are analysed manually. The analysis is descriptive, focusing on the identification and interpretation of different modes and their specific elements. Patterns and conclusions are drawn manually from the organized data.

This research uses 2 data, which are primary and secondary or supporting data. The primary data is collected from VALORANT YouTube Channel: 2 WORLDS // Clove Agent Trailer – VALORANT, while the secondary data is collected from Riot Games’ website: Clove: Death is only the Beginning. The video is not downloaded, instead I stream it on YouTube. Visual data are taken from screenshotting the scene frame by frame from the beginning until the end. These screenshots are selected based on the importance when there are hints of non-binary introduction. I collected in total of 112 data of screenshots, 6 of them are selected to be the main visual data. Textual data is

collected from the background music's lyrics that will be made as a transcript. In addition, textual data from the article is used to support the main data.

[8]'s theory in Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) and Van Dijk's (2015) theory in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) will be conducted to create a Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) that is used to analyse these scenes thoroughly.

3 Results and Discussion

3.1 Visual Analysis of SC-1: Clove First Presence

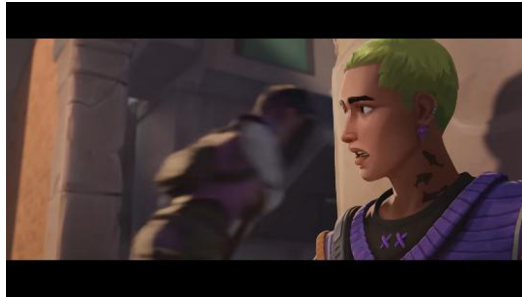


Fig. 1 SS-1: Blurred Clove

[Source: Obtained from VALORANT YouTube Channel video titled 2 WORLDS // Clove Agent Trailer, 24 March 2024]

Representational

This image shows that a blurred figure, Clove, runs through their teammate, Gekko, indicating a sense of urgency or action. In the trailer, Clove is running through to help Gekko to eliminate the enemy. It suggests directional movement and triggering Gekko's reaction. Meanwhile, it is also shown that Gekko reacted to Clove by looking toward them and his mouth is slightly open, indicating surprise, concern, or alertness. Clove is also shown blurred in the first image which indicates lack of visual clarity, in which may also become a metaphor for non-binary identity. It is not entirely noticeable, but it is important and powerful to the scene.

Interactive

In this image, Gekko (Clove teammate), looks toward Clove but not toward the viewers. The viewers are not addressed directly but positioned as an observer of an emotional exchange between characters. The viewers can see Gekko's emotional face through a medium close-up distance, while Clove being further and blurred, creating a layered meaning that Gekko (a known character) is present and readable than Clove (a new and unknown character) to smoothly introduce them. The shot uses eye-level camera angle to give no hierarchy between viewers and characters, supporting emotional alignment

and realism. Clove is shown blur aligns with their narrative function and gender identity, suggesting that their power and identity exist.

Compositional

Though Clove is blurred, it draws the attention of the viewers because of their movement creates strong salience. While Gekko is salient through sharp focus, positioning in the right-corner, leading the eye naturally from Clove to his expression. Clove’s framing reinforces that they are not contained or fixed, aligning with their gender identity.

3.2 Visual Analysis of SC-2: Clove’s Name Introduction



Fig 2. SS-2: Clove Name Introduction

[Source: Obtained from VALORANT YouTube Channel video titled 2 WORLDS // Clove Agent Trailer, 24 March 2024]

Representational

The word “CLOVE” stands as a symbolic attribute, not only for the agent’s name but also an identity. The name is stylised in large serif typeface, indicating uniqueness and complexity. It also uses background, with hues of pink, purple, blue, and orange, associated with both sunrise/sunset and the non-binary/trans pride flags. (See figure 3.) These are not an explicit environment but expressive circumstances, creating a symbolic world of transition, transformation, and in-betweenness. The presence of “ft. MADGE // 2WORLDS” associates Clove with a known queer pop artist and a dual-world concept agent, conveying their ultimate ability to resurrect themselves.



Fig 3. Non-Binary Pride Flag (Left) and Transgender Pride Flag (Right) [Source: Wikipedia]

Interactive

The viewers are meant to receive information rather than interact in this image. It formally introduces the character's name and their narrative framing. How viewers are being positioned here in a medium distance suggests professionalism and formality. The image emphasizes aesthetic interpretation over literal representation. This aligns with queer visual strategies, which often embrace abstraction and symbolism to express fluid identity.

Compositional

The typography "CLOVE" is centrally placed in the frame, suggesting it as the most necessary information. The artist and title line are placed beneath the main element to provide additional content that contextualizes the identity. "CLOVE" stands as the most salient element due to its size, placement, colour contrast, and typographic weight. The background plays a role to guide the viewers' eyes toward the centre and soften the tone.

3.3 Visual Analysis of SC-3: Clove in the Void

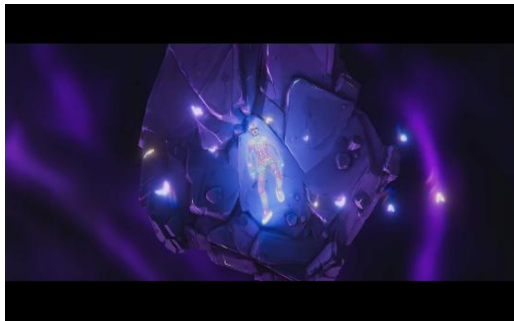


Fig. 4. SS-3: Clove Laying on a Rock

[Source: Obtained from VALORANT YouTube Channel video titled 2 WORLDS // Clove Agent Trailer, 24 March 2024]

Representational

The glowing effect beneath and around the body gives the viewers' attention toward Clove as the key focus point. As they lay on the rock, it implies unconsciousness or death. The dark background reinforces a liminal space, creating an uncomfortable environment, in which implies death. The rock functions as a pedestal, supporting the narrative importance of this scene as a rebirth or transition.

Interactive

As Clove begins to wake up with a long shot, it establishes emotional distance to invite the viewers to think of their symbolic meaning rather than engage with them personally. The bird-eyes view underlines vulnerability and powerlessness. This aligns with this

moment's emotional tone that they are waking up, previously died from the shots, in another dimension. The glowing colour combined with the real texture of the rock create a fantastical and imaginary tone, suggesting transformation.

Compositional

Clove is placed centrally, but they are the main element to be the most salience supported by the lighting and colour contrast highlighting their body. It focuses all visual weight toward Clove's glowing body. The butterflies surrounding Clove strongly emphasise their identity, suggesting that butterflies play important part in introducing Clove.

3.4 Visual Analysis of SC-4: Clove's Background



Fig. 5. SS-4: Clove Floating Above Edinburgh Clock Tower

[Source: Obtained from VALORANT YouTube Channel video titled 2 WORLDS // Clove Agent Trailer, 24 March 2024]

Representational

This image shows Clove floating in the middle of Edinburgh Clock Tower void in the background. Clove, positioned in the middle with a glowing aura, represents as an actor that engages in an actional process of coming back to their home ground, Edinburgh. The fragmented clock tower, surrounded by floating debris and broken ground depicts a ruined world, symbolizes not only their home but also a liminal space that aligns with Clove's non-binary identity. It represents Clove's centrality within the chaos. (Edinburgh correlation to non-binary)

Interactive

While Clove is not looking at the viewers, it suggests the viewers to observe Clove's current situation without demanding direct engagement. This image serves a long shot to reinforce emotional distance, allowing the viewers to focus more on the background while also maintaining Clove's role in the environment. This positions the viewers to observe than judge Clove's identity journey with respect and equality.

Compositional

Clove's placement supports the circumstances to allow the viewers to look at both background and Clove themselves. The glowing blue of Clove's body and the glowing yellow of the Edinburgh Clock Tower play as the primary elements of salience within the dark purple void. It ensures Clove to remain the main focus while visually associating Clove to the clock tower as a symbol of home and time. This composition with ruins surrounding Clove emphasises the reclaiming of their non-binary identity within an environment that bridges life and death, chaos and stability.

3.5 Visual Analysis of SC-5: Clove Changes Colour



Fig. 6. SS-5: Clove Starts to Change Colour after Wiping Tears

[Source: Obtained from VALORANT YouTube Channel video titled 2 WORLDS // Clove Agent Trailer, 24 March 2024]

Representational

Clove is shown facing another figure, which is Clove's other half, indicating there is an interaction between them. Clove seems to be focused shown by the facial expression after wiping one's tears. Furthermore, Clove's glowing elements symbolise power and energy, matching with the non-binary and life-death transcending identity.

Interactive

Clove gives a direct stare at the other figure which they do not make any interaction between them and the viewers, instead they make an offer for the viewers to watch a moment of intimate communication. The medium close-up given suggests personal distance, creating a closeness point of view. Moreover, the slight low camera angle from the other's perspective conveys Clove's dominance and centrality in this moment.

Compositional

The information that can be obtained from this frame is that Clove, placed in the left represents their emotional state. Clove's bright glowing elements draw direct focus, which emphasise Clove's importance in this moment. However, it can be seen that Clove has changed their glowing colour from blue-violet palette to orange-violet palette which represents their non-binary identity as shown in the non-binary pride flag (See

figure 7). In addition, Clove is framed on the left but focused rather than the other, showing their singularity and focus within the scene.

3.6 Visual Analysis of SC-6: Clove Goes Back to Life to Save Teammates



Fig. 7. SS-6: The Portal to Real World

[Source: Obtained from VALORANT YouTube Channel video titled 2 WORLDS // Clove Agent Trailer, 24 March 2024]

Representational

The representational meaning that can be found in this image is that Clove's teammate, Gekko, is reaching inward with an open hand. It represents asking for help, as they were in contact earlier and Clove died trying to help them. However, Clove, in another dimension, discover it all and decide to go back to save their teammates. The floating figures expresses Clove's souls, which signifies resurrection or manipulation of states between life and death. The beam light frames Clove as powerful that they are able to bring their life back to reality. The light patterns resemble sacred geometry, or, a portal, in which Clove use to go back to life.

Interactive

There is no interaction in this image; rather, the viewers are directed to observe the sacred event. In addition, the low angle that places viewers look up at the circular geometry gives the significance of hope and power. Medium-long shot creates an impersonal distance, giving the viewers a view of a powerful event instead of personal intimacy while maintaining the mystical atmosphere.

Compositional

Gekko is placed in the centre and very far back, while the rings and floating figures shape the foreground to lead the eye inward. The bright golden rings project against the background, producing contrast and lead focus to Gekko's hand and figure. The circular geometry frames Gekko and the floating figures to visually isolate this action as a significant moment of power and transformation from death to life. This, somehow also

represents non-binary identity which they have the gender fluidity that cannot make them either male or female.

3.7 Textual Analysis of MADGE – 2WORLDS Lyrics

Macrostructure Analysis

Table 1. Forms of non-binary in the lyrics of MADGE – 2WORLDS

Lyrics/Theme	Thematic	Schematic
“Keep your eyes on me”	Request for recognition	The first verse shows that it establishes the directive statement clearly. It functions as an imperative command for attention and focus. The verse shows that the speaker demands a specific action which might be a call for visibility in a world that often dismisses non-binary identity.
“Anytime you clock a butterfly I flip a switch, keep a secret, let you come inside”	Transformation	This verse creates a conditional permission for intimacy tied to observation. The phrase “...clock a butterfly” symbolises acknowledging the transformation. When the addressee observes something, the speaker reacts (“I flip a switch, keep a secret, let you come inside”)
“When I run, I run the gamut But I could never plan it I keep on breathin’ when I land it”	Movement, chaos	This verse navigates a wide range of spectrum (“...run the gamut”), which mirrors the fluidity and complexity of non-binary experience, through unpredictable ways (“But I could never plan it”). However, the speaker allows continued survival amidst changes (“I keep on breathin’...”)

<p>“If you give me a piece of your heart You’ll keep easy when we are a part Of two worlds, it could be nothin’ Maybe it’s somethin’”</p>	<p>Conditional intimacy</p>	<p>It contains a conditional emotional connection (“...give me a piece of your heart”) across separation (“two worlds”) in uncertain circumstances (“..., it could be nothin’, maybe it’s somethin’”). This verse shows a request for emotional trust, while living in “two worlds” expresses the gap between binary and non-binary experiences.</p>
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Microstructure Analysis

Semantics

Lexical meanings are found throughout the lyrics. In the first verse, the word “keep” implies demand for continuous attention. While “eyes on me” defines the purpose to request the audience to centre their witnessing to the speaker as the object of focus and validation. This complete phrase asks for visibility that represents the non-binary need to be seen in a world that often misrecognises them. Existing literature frequently conflates gender identity with sexual orientation by grouping TGNC (Transgender and Non-Conforming) individuals under the broader LGBTQ+ umbrella, which often results in the “T” being overlooked or silenced in the discussion (Fiani & Han, 2018).

In addition, in the second verse, the word “clock” is not being put literally. Meanwhile it is a signal for the audience to perceive or identify the non-binary. The speaker also uses “butterfly” as a metaphor of transformation or transition, which shows exactly how a non-binary would act. Furthermore, “flip a switch” can be interpreted as a sudden change that mirrors a non-binary may act neither like male or female. This verse also uses “keep a secret” and “let you come inside” to inform the audience about their secretness of a transformation while negotiating boundaries for intimacy.

The word “run” in the third verse explains exploration, continued with “the gamut” which represents the wide spectrum of non-binary. However, the speaker also said “never plan it”, indicating that the non-binary people might not intentionally explore the spectrum or might do a sudden change as I have explained previously. Moreover, “breathin’ when I land it” reflects resilience amidst uncertainty, reinforcing non-binary survival in a binary world.

Lastly, the phrase “give me a piece of your heart” reinforces a request for a genuine trust of someone towards the speaker. The speaker wants people to recognise the non-binary genuinely, while they are in a “two worlds”, which metaphorizes binary gender world and non-binary existence. Also, “Could be nothin’ / Maybe it’s somethin’” expresses ambiguity in a non-binary world. This line expresses ambiguous belonging nature of connection that resonates with non-binary experiences of navigating identity under uncertainty.

Syntax

“Keep your eyes on me”

This sentence is an imperative sentence which gives a direct command to a second-person implied subject “you.” It reflects a demand for recognition, clearly aligning with non-binary identity claiming visibility against societal erasure.

“Anytime you clock a butterfly / I flip a switch, keep a secret, let you come inside”

This verse is a complex sentence with subordinate clause “Anytime you clock a butterfly” and main clause “I flip a switch, keep a secret, let you come inside”. Also, it has the subject “I” that goes before three consecutive verbs (flip, keep, let) with the same subject (you). However, the word “Anytime” creates a contingency in this sentence which the actions in the main clause will happen only when perceived. It can be seen that the complexity of this sentence reflects the layered procedure of non-binary people managing their identity.

“When I run, I run the gamut / But I could never plan it / I keep on breathin’ when I land it”

This verse contains three clauses, which are conditional temporal “When I run, I run the gamut”, independent “But I could never plan it”, and main clause “I keep on breathin’ when I land it”. In this verse, the pronoun “I” is being repeated five (5) times, emphasising personal perspective of the speaker. This repetition emphasises subjective experience and it is important in non-binary identity self-definition. The use of temporal “when” reinforces identity as procedural and situational which describes fluidity in non-binary experiences.

“If you give me a piece of your heart / You’ll keep easy when we are a part / Of two worlds, it could be nothin’ / Maybe it’s somethin’”

The structure of this verse contains conditional sentence; “If you give me a piece of your heart” (cause), “You’ll keep easy when we are a part” (effect); and a fragment clause; “Maybe it’s somethin’”. The alignment “could be nothin’ / maybe it’s somethin’” contains contradictory expressions that mirrors the ambiguity of non-binary identity’s recognition in the society.

Stylistics

“Keep your eyes on me”

This sentence uses simple monosyllabic diction which produce a clear and concise tone. Not only it creates urgency, but it also establishes firmness and demand for recognition. In addition, in the way non-binary individuals often must claim visibility in uncertainty, it aligns with Clove’s presence in the trailer.

“Anytime you clock a butterfly / I flip a switch, keep a secret, let you come inside”

This verse uses a colloquial slang “clock” that reflects queer terms, indicating subcultural belonging. It also uses a metaphor of “butterfly” as a symbol of transformation and transition, which represents non-binary individuals in a binary world. This lyric stylistically creates a hidden narrative of non-binary transformation.

“When I run, I run the gamut / But I could never plan it / I keep on breathin’ when I land it”

The idiom “run the gamut” mentioned in this sentence to express a range and broadness of experience. In addition, to add a lyrical flow, the speaker also uses end rhyme “... plan it / ... land it”. Furthermore, instead of using “breathing”, the speaker tends to use “breathin’” to maintain its casualty.

“If you give me a piece of your heart / You’ll keep easy when we are a part / Of two worlds, it could be nothin’ / Maybe it’s somethin’”

The conditional phrase “If you give me...” used in this sentence creates a tentative and hopeful tone. A metaphor is also used in this sentence “piece of your heart”, indicating emotional vulnerability and intimacy. In addition, the binary opposition “nothin’ / somethin’” used expresses ambiguity and dual possibilities. It also rhymes simultaneously and creates a cohesion in lyrical flow.

Rhetorical

The song’s objective is to communicate the layered experience of living as non-binary when binary is dominating the world to non-binary and queer listeners who seek validation. The song also speaks to broader audiences to encourage reflection on queer’s visibility, safety, and fluidity.

The artist’s placement as a represent of non-binary voice within a queer music space gives authenticity to the lyrics which create credibility to the community. While the lyrics raise feelings of vulnerability, hope for connection, and resilience in uncertainty, it places the listeners within the tension between visibility and safety, typical of non-binary experiences. In addition, the metaphors used in the lyrics illustrate how non-binary individuals navigate private life and public survival. The lyrics also tell the steps of identity within social interactions shown by the progression from demanding visibility to negotiating relational trust.

The lyrics operate as counter-discourse, resisting heteronormative expectations of gender stability and the cultural demand for binary gender visibility. By showing visibility as important but complex, the lyrics persuade listeners to rethink simplistic views of gender and relational dynamics.

Social Cognition

The lyrics of this song use metaphors like “butterfly” and “two worlds” that resonate within LGBTQ+ communities familiar with transformation and liminality. Thus, it creates a shared knowledge among queer listeners who understand “clock a butterfly” as

a reference to visibility of trans/non-binary existence. In addition, “two worlds” also refers to the ambiguity between binary and non-binary realities.

Nonetheless, the lyrics disrupt dominant ideologies in a society that perceives binary gender identities by demanding visibility, as shown in “keep your eyes on me”, to counter societal tendencies to remove non-binary identities; and, normalising fluidity, as shown in “run the gamut”, challenging the society’s expectation of static gender identities. Through these challenges, the lyrics describe counter-ideological manner and invite the listener to acknowledge non-binary existence, aligning with social attitudes within supportive queer communities while resisting heteronormative assumptions.

Furthermore, the lyrics navigate power dynamics in visibility, describing the tension of non-binary individuals wanting to be recognised and its risk while it is being exposed. Sharing individuals’ identity requires trust, safety, and accountability, that is why the speaker said “If you give me a piece of your heart”, indicating conditional vulnerability. The part when the lyrics said “when we are a part / of two worlds” highlights the marginalised identities’ dependence on relational dynamics for safety, emphasising relational negotiations and how non-binary navigate power imbalances.

The emotional flow of “maybe it’s somethin’” reflects the uncertainty about the result of an acknowledgement. It includes processing fear and hopes of recognition while holding space for ambiguous outcomes. Listeners who are familiar with these experiences might relate these emotions to their lived experiences, creating solidarity and affective resonance.

Social Context

Artist like MADGE comes up from a queer environment where non-binary artists demand of expressing lived realities often being underestimated in mainstream media. While their lyrics in 2WORLDS reflect their resistance to normative music industries that often reinforce their song within binary gender frameworks.

Culturally, their lyrics exist within heteronormative society where non-binary identities are mostly invalidated. This shows that they are trying to challenge social erasure, while communicating safety strategies that non-binary individuals do within unsafe environment.

Furthermore, the lyrics describe social contexts of relationships naturally, such as when one is asking for conditional trust in sharing identity because sometimes revealing identity depends on the perceived safety of the environment. The tension of connection mentioned in the lyrics reinforce non-binary experiences of ambiguity in relationships under binary standards. In addition, the lyrics speak about power dynamics where heteronormativity dominates non-binary identities as it speaks to the resilience required to survive under suppressive gender structures. These situations are not abstract but are happening in real life within social context of transphobia, systemic gatekeeping in healthcare, and gender-policing environments. Lastly, the song’s distribution through digital platforms like Spotify and YouTube provides a safe community-building that allows non-binary individuals to find validation outside their hostile environment, which aligns with their purpose of providing visibility to recognise the community.

3.8 Textual Analysis of Clove: Death is the Only Beginning Article

Macrostructure Analysis

Table 2. Macrostructure of the dimension text

Theme/Topic	The main theme in the article is “Go behind the scenes with the Clove dev team” This theme illustrates the background of Clove which is shown by the phrase “behind the scenes” from the developer’s perspective.
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Note. Muhammad Akbar Dzulkarnain’s document

Superstructure Analysis

Introduction

The discourse starts with rhetorical questions which act as hook with the following:

“What if you were able to come back from the grave? Or help your team out from the other side?”

Those sentences are also being reinforced by the following sentence:

“With Clove, you’ll be able to defy the ultimate limit: death.”

The consecutive interrogative sentences reinforce the importance of this topic or subject that might be different from the previous ones. It also reinforces that this upcoming character might have special ability, with life-death environment and, or special identity.

Content

The special ability is shown by mentioning the ultimate skill as the first skill to be introduced, which is placed in the first sub-topic “Beyond Death” in the following:

“Not Dead Yet (X): Clove defies death by activating their immortality essence.”

However, this special ability does not come with no risk, instead it is an ability that requires Clove to unalive an opponent to stay alive, otherwise Clove will be dead anyway as supported in the next sentence:

“To stabilize their form, they must remove the life energy of an opponent.”

In addition, they complete the introduction of Clove’s abilities by introducing Clove’s other abilities, such as Ruse (E), Meddle (Q), and Pick-Me-Up (C). These are Clove’s signature abilities that does not require them to obtain certain orbs to use them. These parts are shown in the sub-sub-topics as follow:

- a. “Ruse (E): Clove’s mind projects a view of the battlefield from above. Using their essence, they manifest vision-obscuring clouds that change the flow of battle, even in death.”
- b. “Meddle (Q): Clove focuses a fragment of immortality essence that, once thrown, deteriorates the life essence of those hit by the blast.”
- c. “Pick-Me-Up (C): Clove absorbs the life energy of a fallen enemy, granting them a moment of increased agility and health.”

This article then continues to introduce Clove’s specialty by saying that this character is different from the other characters in the same role. While the other characters might have to stay alive during the game, Clove can challenge it by having their special ability to resurrect themselves after being killed by the enemy as shown in the following sentence:

“Even as a Controller, you’re meant to take on 1v1s.”

Closing

The writer closes this article by introducing Clove’s background and their identity to reinforce their necessary role in the game as shown by:

“For Clove, their Scottish culture and non-binary identity were big aspects of this.”

The writer wanted to emphasise that Clove is a non-binary agent that come from Scotland, which later affects the targeted audience to feel included in the community.

Microstructure Analysis

Semantics

The introduction of Clove’s special ability and identity is blatantly explained in this article. Clove is introduced as a non-binary character; hence, the writer uses pronoun “they”, which what suits the non-binary individuals and how they want to be mentioned as. Therefore, the writer consistently used this pronoun to mention Clove. In addition, the use of “they” in this article not only represents Clove, but also intended to represent all the queer community, especially non-binary individuals to embrace inclusivity.

Syntax

The article uses consecutive rhetorical questions that hooks the readers as shown in the beginning of the article:

“What if you were able to come back from the grave? Or help your team out from the other side?”

In addition, the writer also uses direct speech from related parties to keep the use of second-person pronouns (you, your) to establish direct engagement to the readers. The use of direct speech and contractions (you’ll, we’ll, it’s) maintains an informal and conversational tone:

“To unlock their kit, you’ll need to take those calculated risks and jump into the fray.”

“Sometimes it’s correct to ultimate even if you don’t think you’ll be able to get a kill...”

Stylistics

The writers use direct address to the player (you) to create a conversational and engaging article. In addition, they address Clove as “they” and use the term “non-binary” to explicitly introduce Clove’s true identity and include the queer readers to the community. The article also uses specific lexis such as “Controller”, “smokes”, and “ult” which positions the reader within the VALORANT gaming discourse community. Furthermore, metaphorical language like “walk the fine line”, “dance around death”, “beautiful death” is also used in the article to express complex ideas that go beyond literal meaning.

To signal section changes, the article uses all-caps headings such as “BEYOND DEATH”, “ALL RISK, ALL REWARD”. It also uses special headings for abilities, like “Not Dead Yet (X)”, to create easy scanning, typical in game article and promotional writing.

Rhetoric

This discourse uses quotation and references developers (penguin, Riot-MEMEMEMEME, Pwam) to ensure credibility and insider authority. In order to persuade readers, the writer uses type of hypophora and anaphora to gain more attention to the discourse.

Hypophora:

“What if you were able to come back from the grave? Or help your team our from the other side? ... With Clove, you’ll be able to defy the ultimate limit: death.”

Anaphora:

“How do we create...? How can we make...?”

In addition, the article establishes storytelling which tells Clove’s Scottish roots and design philosophy to create an appealing narrative framing that is embedded in factual explanation.

3.9 Developing Multimodal Literacy through Visual and Textual Meaning-Making

The visual and textual elements in Clove trailer do not act individually, instead they interact to build a layered understanding of non-binary identity within the game’s narrative and its wider community. Visually, Clove’s colour grading, camera angles, and overall animation emphasise power and resilience, ensuring Clove is perceived as equally competent and significant as other agents regardless of gender identity. Clove’s

appearance resonates with diverse audiences and subtly educating the gaming community on the non-binary spectrum without relying on stereotypical visual markers.

While textually, the use of gender-neutral pronouns (they/them) and empowering phrases in the article's text normalises non-binary pronoun usage, integrating it seamlessly into the game's language environment. The article allows the identity to be present without overshadowing the character's capabilities. This is crucial for introducing non-binary identities to a gaming community that may be unfamiliar with it, as it demonstrates that non-binary individuals exist within all spaces, including competitive environments like VALORANT.

Additionally, the construction of meaning ensures that even if a player does not fully understand the significance of non-binary identity, they are repeatedly exposed to them in a positive, heroic context through Clove's existence, which can gradually normalise and foster acceptance within the community. These visual and textual elements work to construct a coherent representation of non-binary identity, presenting it as a normal and respected part of the VALORANT universe while ensuring accessibility and relatability for the gaming community.

4 Conclusion

Through Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA), specifically Visual Grammar theory conducted—consisting of representational meaning, interactive meaning, and compositional meaning—by [8], the analysis revealed that the trailer utilises most of the representational metafunction to construct Clove's presence as a non-binary agent. The visual mode consists of gestures, colour palettes, camera angles, and character design. In order to communicate Clove's identity visually, it is found that the trailer combined Clove's gaze style, fluid body movement, and the combination of how Clove is shown both masculine (in terms of combat readiness) and feminine (how Clove visually look). By using this method, Clove's identity in their trailer turned out to be represented implicitly rather than blatantly obvious, which requires myself to interpret the elements contained in the trailer. The trailer positions Clove as a capable agent first while allowing their non-binary identity to be visible through visual representations.

In addition, by utilising Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) by [18]), I was able to analyse the song lyrics of MADGE – 2WORLDS in the trailer based on macrostructure, microstructure, social cognition, and social contexts. The song tells the listeners that they are experiencing difficulties of living as non-binary in a binary expected world. By incorporating these lyrics, I aimed to deepen the exploration of how language is used to reflect the non-binary presence of the character within the limited textual environment. Stylistically, they are not telling the listeners directly, instead they utilise some language style like metaphors, colloquial slang, and idioms to deliver the message. By presenting Clove as a fully integrated into game mechanics while consistently using gender-affirming language and visuals, the trailer subtly normalises non-binary representation within a competitive gaming world. Furthermore, I also utilise Van Dijk's CDA to analyse the article based on macrostructure, superstructure, and microstructure, enabling me to understand and support the previous analysis to prove Clove's

identity in the trailer. It can be inferred that different from the trailer, the article introduced Clove's identity explicitly while the trailer introduced it implicitly. The trailer effectively employs visual and textual (through audio) to simultaneously construct meaning and introduce non-binary identity to the community. It demonstrated how multimodal resources can be utilised to shape inclusive narrative within video games which include in the digital media contexts, where identity and capability coexist without causing conflict, making a move toward a more broad, diverse, and accepting gaming environment. Moreover, inclusivity in video gaming could make the game be accepted in the community, which leads to broader audience and benefits the game creator.

The concern that I faced while writing this research is that the main data is textually limited, making this research is conducted with less textual sources. However, I was able to extract external source, which is the article. In addition, my research is limited from visual and textual only, while an addition of auditory analysis would help to reveal variations in non-binary presence inside a trailer. Furthermore, an auditory analysis of sound design, voice tone, ambient audio cues in future studies could add a richer dimension in understanding how the trailer represents non-binary identity, allowing a fuller multimodal discourse analysis of non-binary/queer characters in video game media. This limitation arose because the trailer primarily consists of visual and in-game cinematic actions, which provide limited direct textual material to analyse, aside from on-screen text and lyrics. In addition, there could be missing part of screenshots in a scene that I did manually in collecting it which I believe could affect the whole analysis, so that it would be better for future researchers to carefully collect the data.

Future studies could explore how race, nationality, and gender identity intersect in other non-binary/queer characters in video gaming, providing a richer understanding of inclusivity within multimodal gaming discourse. In addition, future research could also compare how queer characters are represented multimodally amongst other competitive games to explore whether non-binary representation remains consistent or varies based on game genre or audience expectations.

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