

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains five parts. Those are the background of the study, research questions, objectives of the study, significance of the study, and scope and limitation of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

Storytelling is a powerful way to share knowledge, and today it has taken on new forms through digital media. Interactive digital storytelling uses technology, creativity, and user interaction to present information in interesting ways. It's used in many fields, including education, history, games, and the arts. Like traditional literature, it creates characters and explores themes that help people connect with stories on a deeper level. This modern storytelling style combines entertainment and learning, allowing audiences to experience stories in new and meaningful ways. It has many benefits, but it also creates challenges. For example, it is difficult to balance artistic freedom with accuracy. Even so, it shows how storytelling is still changing and helping people think about new ideas and possibilities (Rizvic et al., 2020).

Literature and media have always been closely connected. They influence each other and reflect each other's creativity and expression. Literature has been a mirror and a guide for human thought, emotion, and culture since the earliest oral traditions, where stories were passed down through generations by word of mouth, and the written word was preserved in manuscripts and books. As media forms grew, so did the ways people could share and experience literary content.

New technologies, like the printing press, film, television, and digital platforms, have changed the relationship between literature and media. Novels have been made into movies and plays. Poems have inspired music and visual art. Short stories have been made into animations and series. These changes not only make literary works more accessible, but they also open up new ways to interpret and create. They show how the line between written and visual storytelling is always changing.

Today, literature continues to influence media, just as media reshapes how literature is created and consumed. Social media, audiobooks, e-readers, and streaming platforms are new ways to tell stories. They also make us think about what a literary work is. By exploring how literature and media are changing over time, we can understand how stories are affected by the culture and technology of the past, present, and future. We can also see how these stories continue to influence art and popular entertainment (Santha Devi & Santhi, 2024).

In the past, video games were often seen as a negative influence, distracting people from more important activities. This perception made many people hesitant to view them as anything more than entertainment. However, a growing trend suggests video games have the potential to be valuable tools for learning and education (De Aguilera, 2003).

One study examined this idea by focusing on how people's views on video games changed after receiving training on their potential benefits. The results shows a significant shift in perspective. People who were initially skeptical became more open to the idea of video games being used for positive purposes (Díaz, 2014).

While educators often dismiss video games, their potential for learning is vast. For example a game based on "*Roadside Picnic*," a novel filled with mysterious anomalies and hazardous zones. This concept could be transformed into a captivating experience like S.T.A.L.K.E.R.: Shadow of Chernobyl. Players could explore a forbidden area filled with environmental puzzles and dangerous mutations, mirroring the thrilling and thought-provoking atmosphere of the book. Such a game would not just be entertaining, it could encourage players to grapple with complex themes and navigate challenging situations, just like the characters in the novel (Utoyo, 2018).

Videogames have a strong hold on the attention of children and adolescents, necessitating an evaluation of their impact on early education. While commercial games have the ability to interest children in learning, only a small number of them provide instructional value. However, some evidence suggests playing videogames might improve skills such as spatial visualization, which may benefit those who have initially poorer talents. Furthermore, videogames may help to lessen

differences in spatial skill performance among individuals. For more than 20 years, writers have used videogames to study people (Griffiths, n.d. 2014)

Video games are not just about entertainment anymore. They offer rich narratives and captivating stories that can draw players in and leave them wanting more. This can even bridge the gap in literature. When a game based on a complex novel – players delve into the world, unraveling its mysteries and forming a connection with the story. This enthusiasm can then translate to the original book, as players seek a deeper understanding of the story they've already grown invested in (Utoyo, 2018).

Video games have grown in popularity and are currently being studied for their educational potential, particularly in the teaching of literacy. Researchers are investigating how video games can improve literacy education nevertheless, while there is evidence that games can assist students learn, there is yet no concrete evidence of their practical benefits for literacy teaching. Most studies merely find links between video games and learning, but additional research is needed to determine how games might particularly predict advances in literacy instruction. (Shahrehabaki, 2019)

Video games have evolved to play a significant role in literacy and education due to their interactive and engaging nature. They offer immersive environments where players actively participate, enhancing critical thinking, problem-solving, and comprehension skills. Educational games are designed to balance subject matter with enjoyable gameplay, making learning more appealing and effective. Additionally, video games can improve cognitive abilities, foster creativity, and promote collaboration and teamwork among players. By integrating storytelling and complex narratives, games encourage players to read, interpret, and engage with content, thereby enhancing literacy skills (Eng, 2023).

According to a Granic (2014) there's a call for a more nuanced understanding of video games' impact. While past research fixated on potential negatives like violence and addiction, the writer argue for acknowledging the potential benefits, particularly considering the evolving nature of gaming and recent research (within the last five years). They pinpoint four key areas where video games can have

positive effects: cognitive, motivational, emotional, and social. By drawing on various psychological perspectives, the study proposes mechanisms through which gaming can translate to real-world psychosocial advantages. This highlights the need for further exploration into the positive applications of video games and paves the way for future interventions and research in this domain.

This part highlights an intertextual analysis approach to literary analysis: adapting classic works into interactive video games. Amaral & Joanna Church proposes a step by step method for transforming dramas and novels into short video games. This method goes beyond traditional analysis by allowing writers to explore the source material through an immersive and playable experience. The example provided, a video game adaptation of Shakespeare's "Macbeth" titled "Something Wicked," demonstrates how this approach can illuminate themes, character development, and plot elements in a new light. This innovative methodology not only furthers scholarly understanding of literature but also highlights the enduring influence of novels and plays on the creative minds of video game designers (Church, 2021).

Roadside Picnic's success was due to its unique combination of science fiction and study of philosophy. The novel grabbed readers with its cryptic "Zone," an alien visitation site filled with unusual events and relics of unknown characteristics. This frightening yet alluring setting fuelled a sense of mystery and wonder, forcing readers to consider the nature of humanity's place in the world as well as the repercussions of encountering something unknown. Furthermore, the novel's emphasis on the "stalkers" who ventured into the Zone for profit, often at considerable personal risk, struck a chord with readers by providing a gritty and ethically problematic human aspect among the fanciful. This combination of adventurous adventure, intellectual depth, and complex personalities cemented *Roadside Picnic's* reputation as an important piece of science fiction.

The *S.T.A.L.K.E.R. (Scavengers, Trespassers, Adventurers, Loners, Killers, Explorers and Robbers)* video game series draws heavily from the thematic and atmospheric elements established in Arkady and Boris Strugatsky's science fiction novel "*Roadside Picnic*." While not a direct adaptation, the games capture the essence of the novel's "Zone" – a mysterious region left behind by alien visitation.

Both works depict this Zone as a hazardous and anomalous environment, rife with strange phenomena and artifacts with unknown properties. The S.T.A.L.K.E.R. (Scavengers, Trespassers, Adventurers, Loners, Killers, Explorers and Robbers) series adopts the "stalker" concept as well, placing the player in the role of an individual venturing into the Zone for profit or personal gain. This focus on player agency and exploration allows the games to effectively recreate the sense of awe and trepidation associated with encountering the unknown, echoing the philosophical themes explored in *"Roadside Picnic"* (Rossignol, 2007).

The concept of adaptation takes on new meaning when considering video games inspired by books. Unlike film adaptations, which were traditionally judged on their faithfulness to the source material, video games introduce a more fundamental shift. Here, transforming a story from a book's linear narrative into an interactive experience requires significant adaptation. While the core plot might be preserved, the way players engage with the story changes entirely. This goes beyond tweaks and edits – it's a more radical transformation, demanding creative decisions to translate characters, themes, and worlds into a playable format (Araújo, 2017).

A recent study by Saptanto (2021) highlights video games as a burgeoning form of modern popular culture. The research employs a descriptive qualitative method, analyzing video games through the lens of adaptation theory. Specifically, the study dissects the intertwined nature of narrative and narration within video game storylines. The writer conclude that player choice acts as a crucial element, binding narrative and storyline together. This unique characteristic, they argue, creates a dense dramatic form where the narrative adapts and evolves based on player decisions. This dynamic interplay, the study suggests, positions video games as a novel form of literary work within the realm of contemporary popular culture. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the creator's role in crafting a narrative framework that empowers players to explore and engage freely, shaping their own unique stories within the game's world.

While some argue adaptation, in its broadest sense, can encompass any reworking of past cultural creations, this study adopts a more manageable definition. Here, adaptation is seen as both a process (the act of transforming a work) and a product (the resulting creation). The Previous studies about *Roadside*

Picnic were focused on the movie or how it functions as a propaganda. Meanwhile, this study focuses on the discussion of transforming the narrative elements from the novel into the games.

The narrative of *Roadside Picnic* centers on Red Schuhart's personal troubles as a stalker in the alien Zone, delving into themes of human insignificance, exploitation, and existential dread, with the Zones representing humanity's inability to comprehend higher-level phenomena. In contrast, the video game *S.T.A.L.K.E.R.: Shadow of Chernobyl* reimagines the Zone as a post-apocalyptic wasteland impacted by the Chernobyl tragedy, with an emphasis on action-oriented gameplay, open-world exploration, and survival elements. While the novel focuses on moral ambiguity and philosophical introspection, the game adds new plotlines, groups, and objectives, emphasizing player-driven storytelling above existential depth. Furthermore, the game substitutes the aliens and their strange artifacts with a radiation-soaked world created by an unreal experiment, altering the narrative focus from cosmic horror to survival amid a catastrophe caused by humans.

1.2 Research Questions

In this study, the writer proposes two research questions, those are:

1. What are the fidelities found in the process of transformation?
2. What are the innovations found in the process of transformation?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

There are two objectives as follow:

1. To find out "*Roadside Picnic's*" narrative (fidelity vs. innovation) for *S.T.A.L.K.E.R* (video games) through Hutcheon's lens.
2. To find out the innovation to study how narrative choices in both works (novel vs. game) influence user experience and themes.

1.4 Significance of the Study

- Theoretically, This study explores into the adaptation process of "*Roadside Picnic*" into the video game "*S.T.A.L.K.E.R*" through the lens of Linda Hutcheon's adaptation theory. By analysing how the narrative is transformed for the video game medium, this research contributes to practical understanding of how storytelling evolves across different formats. It explores concepts like fidelity, innovation, and the target audience in the context of video game adaptations, enriching the field of adaptation studies.
- Practically, this study can show how video games can serve as innovative tool for storytelling and educational purposes. This study can also offer insights into the process and benefits of transforming a novel into a video game. The study's emphasis on narrative faithfulness and originality also serves as important frameworks for future adaptation study, broadening our understanding of how diverse media might improve the storytelling environment. From novels to video games and vice versa. This proves that any media can evolve into something new.

1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study analyses the adaptation of Arkady and Boris Strugatsky's *Roadside Picnic* into the video game *S.T.A.L.K.E.R.: Shadow of Chernobyl*, utilizing Linda Hutcheon's adaptation theory as the fundamental framework. The study investigates how the novel's narrative and thematic elements such as story, characters, and atmosphere are adapted for the interactive medium, focusing on the first game in the series. It excludes the sequels (*Clear Sky* and *Call of Prip'yat*), other adaptations, such as Tarkovsky's film *Stalker*, and technical aspects of game creation. The study relies on personal gameplay observations and documented experiences rather than empirical data gathered via player feedback. While the novel and game's sociopolitical background may be mentioned briefly, the major focus remains on narrative and thematic transformation, player engagement, and the interplay between integrity and originality in adaptation.