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ŘEČOVÉ AKTY VE VIDEOHRÁCH

SPEECH ACTS IN VIDEOGAMES

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Speech Acts in Videogames

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Identify speech acts typical of videogames and explain their role. Compare speech acts in 2 videogames from different genres and explain the potential differences.

RECOMMENDED LITERATURE:

Austin, J. L. (1971). How to do things with words: The William James lectures delivered at Harvard University in 1955. Oxford University Press.

Huang, Y. (2007). Pragmatics. Oxford University Press.

Searle, J. R. (1976). A classification of illocutionary acts. Language in society, 5(1), 1-23.

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Abstract

This bachelor thesis introduces a new approach of classifying interactions in video games based on the interaction between addressor and addressee and includes an analysis and comparison of speech acts in video games Life Is Strange and Call of Duty. This classification can be used to aid the process of analysis of speech acts in other video games and also assist game developers in the process of creating in-game interactions. To create such classification, the relation between the player and an interactable in-game element had to be prioritised. Then, the main classes of interactions in video games are introduced with each class containing specific types of speech acts. The analysis of speech acts in Life Is Strange and Call of Duty serves as an example of how this classification can be used and also shows many examples of how the game conveys information to the player. The list of interactions in this paper is not complete, but includes the most common and universal ones.

Keywords

Speech acts; video games; pragmatics; classification of utterances; text analysis

Abstrakt

Tato bakalářská práce poskytuje nový pohled na klasifikaci interakcí ve videohrách založený na adresátovi a adresovaném a obsahuje analýzu řečových aktů ve hrách Life Is Strange a Call of Duty. Tato klasifikace může být použita ke zjednodušení procesu analýzy řečových aktů v ostatních videohrách. Aby bylo možné takovou klasifikaci vytvořit, bylo nutné zaměřit se na vztah mezi hráčem a interagovatelným herním prvkem. Následně jsou představeny hlavní třídy interakcí ve videohrách, kde každá třída obsahuje specifické typy řečových aktů. Analýza řečových aktů v Life Is Strange a Call of Duty slouží primárně jako příklad toho, jak lze tuto klasifikaci použít a také představuje způsoby jak hra zprostředkovává informace hráči. Seznam interakcí ve videohrách není úplný, ale zahrnuje ty nejběžnější a nejuniverzálnější.

Klíčová slova

Řečové akty; videohry; pragmatika; klasifikace promluv; analýza textu

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Kyjov, May 11, 2022

Prohlášení

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V Brně dne …… ……...

David Šurýn

Contents

Introduction

The application of speech act theory for defining, categorising, and analysing speech acts in the medium of video games is a challenging problem to tackle. Some of the most fundamental issues regarding speech acts remain discussed to this day, for example the level of cultural universality of this theory (Wierzbicka, 2003). The medium of video games has a broad number of game genres consisting of many ways of communicating information to and with the player. The appropriate use of speech acts, especially in a nonlinear medium such as video games is crucial, otherwise a person interacting with the game may become confused, inattentive, or bored.

In this bachelor thesis, the objectives are to briefly summarise the past and current research in the field of speech acts and simultaneously introduce the main concepts crucial for the analysis of speech acts. The next important matter is to examine the medium of video games, mostly the evolution of communication and interaction between the game and the player and then apply collected information to find or create a suitable classification of video game interactions based on the addressor and addressee. The main question is if this type of classification can be utilised to narrow down the possible types of speech acts in individual interactions and consequently streamline the process of video game interaction analysis.

This bachelor thesis is divided into four main parts. The first chapter introduces the key concepts in the speech act theory. In the second chapter, the medium of video games is described, and the reader is acquainted with a brief history of video games focused on the methods of communication. The third chapter combines the insights from the first two and provides a classification of speech acts in video games. In the last chapter, the video games Life Is Strange and Call of Duty are introduced. The story and main gameplay mechanics are discussed and then, the speech acts are analysed and put into the different classes of interactions. The analysed speech acts in these video games are then compared and conclusions are drawn.

1. Speech acts and their categorization

In pragmatics, the main focus is not on the sentence structure or the words themselves, but on the underlying meaning of expressed utterances and the utilisation of language in social interactions (Levinson, 2017). The study of the meaning within human interaction through language and the study of how context contributes to the implication of utterances is one of the most rapidly growing fields of linguistics and its understanding is in many cases essential in the process of creating and analysing video games. One of the phenomena that concern pragmatics is the speech act.

Speech act theory is concerned with utterances not only carrying information but also initialising or constituting actions. The core idea is that any piece of spoken or written language is in fact a speech act trying to achieve something according to the speaker, with a certain chance of success that depends on a variety of felicity conditions (Huang, 2017). The basis for this theory was first proposed by British philosopher John Langshaw Austin, who created the base concepts of speech act theory after recognizing that the professional linguistic view on the use of language was different from the actual use in everyday life. His contributions, delivered through Oxford and Harvard lectures, were published posthumously in How To Do Things With Words (Austin, 1975). He categorised utterances into two categories:

- ***Constatives*** - Statements that are either true or false. The truthfulness depends on their correspondence with the facts and the world (Austin, 1975).
  - Example: “I am cold.” (The addressor is constating his state of body temperature.)
- ***Performatives*** - Utterances that actively perform a certain action. They do not directly describe the world and cannot be either true or false. In Austin's definition, this utterance contains a performative verb which by itself carries the illocutionary force that performs an action (Austin, 1975).
  - Example: “I request you to give me your jacket.” (The performative verb in this example is “request”, the action performed is therefore direct request.)

Austin first only identified the performatives as speech acts and distinguished them from constatives. He then categorised the different causes of speech act success or

failure which he called felicity conditions. These are based on circumstances, relationships, sincerity and intention The felicity conditions were then used in the analysis of utterances, which can consist of three related acts:

- ***Locutionary act*** - The locutionary act is the utterance itself in the form of a spoken word, written text or a gesture (Austin, 1975).
- ***Illocutionary act (Illocutionary force)*** - This is the speech act proper, which Austin analysed with felicity conditions. It encompasses the sense of utterance performing an action. The illocutionary act is the intention of the speaker. (Levinson, 2017)
- ***Perlocutionary act*** - It is the consequence (or effect) of the utterance, which does or does not have to correspond to the expected outcome. The perlocutionary act usually lays the foundation for the next utterance but not all utterances necessary include the perlocutionary act (Austin, 1975).
- ***Example:***
    - *Locutionary act*: "Hello David. Isn't it cold in here ?"
    - *Illocutionary act*: The speaker wants to let the hearer know he/she feels cold and wants him to change the temperature.
    - *Perlocutionary act*: The speaker will either turn the heater on or not.

Illocutionary acts are the main focus in the speech act theory as illocutionary force is in fact the centre point of said theory. Even though Austin's classification of different illocutionary speech acts was very influential and created an important core of speech act theory, it was not without flaws. The classification was later examined and further developed by American philosopher John Searle. He pointed out that in Austin's classification, the focus is mostly on illocutionary verbs. This meant that in Austin's theory, each illocutionary verb must accommodate a different illocutionary force, which, as Searle argued, is not always the case (Searle, 1976). Austin's view incorrectly placed many speech acts in the wrong group of illocutionary force. The classification was also questionable because it allowed for numerous speech acts to fall incorrectly into multiple categories (Huang, 2017). In Searles approach, he distinguished twelve different dimensions across which illocutionary acts can differ. The three most

important are the *illocutionary point,* which is the purpose of utterance, the *direction of fit,* which deals with words (propositional content within utterance) and their relation to the world (state of affairs in the world) and vice versa, describing the effects these two terms have on each other and the *psychological state* (Searle, 1976).

Using this approach Searle derived one constative and four performative categories of speech acts:

- ***Representatives*** - The main purpose is to communicate the proposition of a statement (Searle, 1976). Representatives can be either true or false, same as constatives in Austin's classification of utterances by their application. The direction of fit is word-to-world.
  - *Example 1.*: "Did you know that I am smarter than you?" (The speaker is indirectly informing the hearer about the difference of intelligence between them. This information presented, however, can or cannot be true.)
  - *Example 2.*: "The Earth is flat" (The speaker is directly stating that the earth is in his opinion flat. This utterance is not true.)

- ***Directives*** - The main purpose is to, in varying degrees, make the hearer do something (Searle, 1976). Directives can range from unobtrusive and peaceful propositions to direct orders. However, regardless of the forwardness or effort, directives do not guarantee success and in most cases are merely attempts. The direction of fit is world-to-word.
  - *Example 1.*: "Wouldn't you like to open the window?" (The speaker is indirectly in the form of a question directing the hearer to open the window.)
  - *Example 2.*: "Immediately open the goddamn window!" (The speaker is directing the hearer to open the window in an aggressive tone.)

- ***Commissives*** - The main purpose is to commit the speaker to some future course of action (Searle, 1976). This category is the only one that remained almost identical to Austin's classification. The direction of fit is world-to-word.

- *Example 1.*: “I solemnly swear that I am up to no good” (Rowling, 2001, p. 127). (The speaker is committing himself to use a magic map for activities that are not considered good.)
- *Example 2.*: “We will never allow money laundering in our country.” (The speaker is committing himself to prevent money laundering and to never making it legal to launder money. The utterance is also a representative that informs the hearer that money laundering is not allowed.)

- ***Expressives*** **-** The main purpose is to express the speaker's emotions, attitudes, and generally psychological state towards certain propositions. Common cases are thanking, congratulating, apologising and welcoming (Searle, 1976).
  - *Example 1.*: “I am sorry for your loss.” (The speaker is expressing sorrow at a funeral.)
  - *Example 2.*: “We are forever grateful for your contribution to our fund.” (The speaker is directly expressing gratitude towards the addressee for his financial contribution.)

- ***Declarations*** **-** This category is unique due to its property of, when successfully used, actively changing the world by the utterance itself. Many declarations rely on institutional backgrounds with some of the common cases being declaring a war, baptising, christening, marriage and resigning (Searle, 1976). The direction of fit is world-to-word.
  - *Example 1.*: “You are fired!” (The speaker, in this example a superior of the addressee, declares the hearer discharged from job in an aggressive way.)
  - *Example 2.*: “I pronounce you husband and wife.” (The speaker, in this example a priest declares a couple married.)

This classification was deemed comprehensive and is widely accepted by many linguists, however Anna Wierzbicka identified Searles analysis as not applicable to all languages. In some languages, the concepts that are necessary for the speech act classification such as imposing, and relevancy do not have one to one translation that would carry the identical meaning. Another problem that can occur when dealing with

speech acts is within the understanding of the meaning of direct and indirect utterances, mostly in requests. In the Anglo-Saxon culture, requests are mostly indirect for greater politeness and softening the impact of the utterance. This, however, is not used in some languages and speech acts can be misunderstood (Wierzbicka, 2003).

In the identification and categorization of different speech acts in video games, I will use Searle's classification, despite the weaknesses discussed above. This decision is based on the general nature of video games mostly being made by and for English-speaking audiences.

Another aspect of utterances is the directness and indirectness. A *direct utterance* can be described as one which explicitly states the intended meaning of an utterance. *Indirect utterances*, however, are special in the sense that one speech act "carries two illocutionary forces"(Searle, 1975). Searle explained this as "one illocutionary act being performed indirectly by means of performing another" (Searle quoted in Thomas, 1995). for example, a statement can be simultaneously a request (example 2.).

- ***Example 1.:***

  - *Direct speech act:* "I can run a mile in under four minutes." (Representative speech act where the speakers directly share information about their ability.)
  - *Indirect speech act*: "Do you know that I am smarter than you?" (Representative speech act that indirectly shares information about the speaker by asking the addressee about his knowledge of this fact.)

- ***Example 2.:***

  - *Direct speech act:* "Pass me the salt." (Directive speech act directly telling the addressee to pass the salt to the speaker.)
  - *Indirect speech act:* "Can you pass me the salt?" (Directive speech act that by querying felicity conditions about the ability of the addressee to pass the salt indirectly tells the hearer to perform this action.)

- ***Example 3.:***

  - *Direct speech act:* “I will help you tomorrow.” (Commissive speech act that directly commits the speaker to help the hearer.)

  - *Indirect speech act:* “I can help you tomorrow” (Commissive speech act that indirectly commits the speaker to help the hearer by stating the felicity condition about his ability to perform this act.)

2. What is a video game

A video game is interactive software designed primarily for entertainment purposes. Video games can be executed on a variety of devices, such as home computers, smartphones, home consoles or virtual reality hardware. Human interaction is required, otherwise, it would contradict the interactive aspect of this medium. The interaction can be established using a control device such as a keyboard and mouse, a game controller or a touch screen.

The medium of video games is the most profitable and the fastest growing area of the entertainment industry (Richter, 2020). Its recent mainstream popularity and influence on the way people spend free time creates a justified scientific interest in the analysis of the many aspects of this media. In order to gain an in-depth understanding of speech acts in video games, it is necessary to provide a brief overview of the history of video games.

2.1 History

Video games were first introduced to a wide audience in the form of arcade video games in the early 1970s (The Strong, 2013). They were usually situated in public spaces such as bars, carnivals and amusement arcades. The disadvantages were no portability, limited number of control buttons, only one game option per arcade cabinet and functioning on the base of an attempt per certain amount of coins (The Strong, 2013).

Arcades were a popular form of entertainment; however, with the technical development of hardware and software, manufacturers started working on portable devices capable of switching between different video games using cartridges. In the 1970s, first game consoles were introduced to the market with the intention of attaining a wide audience. The first example of a portable gaming device for the masses was the *Magnavox Odyssey* displayed in Figure 1 (Reyes, 2020).

Figure 1 Magnavox Odyssey with controller (Amos, 2015)

There were 28 games distributed, with 13 games included with the console. Two controllers were able to be connected at once, allowing multiple people to play simultaneously. It seems that none of the games had any speech acts with no menu screen or in-game text.

The popularity of the console motivated other manufacturers to produce their own video game hardware capable of displaying text. One of the most notable and popular was the Atari 2600 displayed in Figure 2 (CHM).

Figure 2 Atari 2600 with a controller (Amos, 2011)

The console was, at the time, technologically advanced, with bigger memory than its competitors and a wide 128-colour palette, allowing for many new video game genres previously available only on arcade machines, such as platform games (e.g. Pitfall; released in 1982 - the main gameplay mechanic consists of moving the playable

character from one point to another usually by walking and jumping on platforms), shooter games (e.g. Asteroids; released in 1979 - the gameplay consists mostly of shooting different targets or enemies) and adventure games (e.g. Adventure; released in 1980 - games that are focused on the playable character exploring the environment). The game catalogue grew exponentially, reaching approximately 528 licenced and unlicenced games (Wikipedia contributors, 2021), some of them included speech acts in the text form, usually only on the menu screen. Despite the technical ingenuity, the games were still similar to the arcade alternatives and did not have any real story or dialogue (Loguidice, 2008), which changed with the release of the *Nintendo Entertainment System(*NES) displayed in Figure 3.

Figure 3 Nintendo entertainment system with controller (Amos, 2010a)

In 1983, Nintendo released a video game console called Family Computer (Famicom), which became widely popular in Japan and preceded the NES which was a redesigned version for the American market. The NES helped to resurrect the video game market through inventive and entertaining games such as Super Mario, Metroid, and Legend of Zelda (BugSplat, 2020). Because of the 8-bit memory, there was an opportunity for complex long stories paired with a compelling gameplay. Dialogues between video game characters became common, mostly in the adventure and role-playing game genre (Centre for Computing History, n.d.). However, the 8-bit and the 16-bit game consoles did not have enough disk space to store longer sound and music files, so most of the dialogue was still in text form. Despite this, in this period one can see initial attempts at spoken utterances, first being in the game Space Spartans

(Intellivision, 1982), but the most well-known utterance from this era can be found in Mortal Kombat (Arcade machine; later ported to Super NES, released in 1992).

2.2 Current state of video gaming

The new era of video game consoles, primarily the PlayStation 1, introduced today's well-known design of gaming controllers displayed in Figure 4.

Figure 4 PlayStation 1 controller (Amos, 2010b)

Gaming shifted from mostly 2D environments to 3D game worlds, which brought extensive potential for innovation of all genres, such as shooter games, story-driven adventure games and racing games. In the next few years, gaming was slowly adapted by home computers, which were more affordable and capable of running demanding software. The bigger storage made spoken dialogue possible, which created more immersion and connection between the player and the character. The growth of the industry introduced the concept of AAA games with substantial budgets used to create games with sprawling dialogue trees, allowing the player to choose different speech acts. The concept of branching dialogue was not new but was not as common before then. The expansion of the Internet allowed for the creation of online multiplayer games. New video game genres emerged, such as:

Online shooters - multiplayer games with the focus on player versus player combat, usually consisting of a player controlling a character in either first or third person, carrying and using different types of shooting weapons. (e.g. Counter-Strike series)

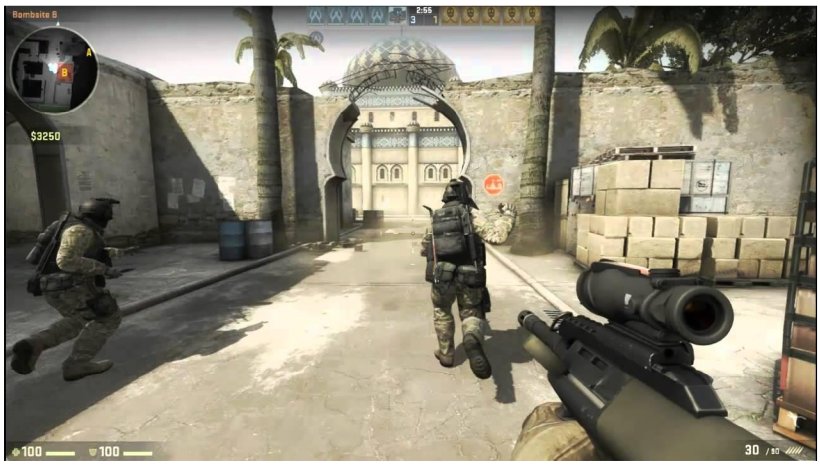

Figure 5 *Counter-Strike: Global Offensive (Taken from www.gamesradar.com)*

MMORPGs - massively multiplayer online role-playing games with many players in the same virtual world. The player usually controls a playable character and explores the world, fights enemies, completes quests for rewards and collects equipment. (e.g. World of Warcraft; released in 2004)

Figure 6 *World of Warcraft (Taken from www.pcgamer.com)*

Online sports games - a virtual representation of real sports played over the internet or in person on a single console. Most common sports represented in this genre are soccer,

football, hockey and basketball. The player can either control one or multiple playable characters at once and compete in the above-mentioned sports. (e.g. FIFA series)

Figure 7 Fifa 22 (Taken from www.czechgamer.com)

MOBA games - multiplayer online battle arena games, where two teams fight against each other to overpower and defeat the other team. Player controls a character with various abilities and fights other players and non-player characters. (e.g. Dota 2; released in 2013)

Figure 8 Dota 2 (Taken from www.nme.com)

Battle royale games - a large number of players competing with the goal of defeating all other players. This is a specific subgenre of online games, which became widely

popular in recent years due to their competitiveness. (e.g. PlayerUnknown's Battlegrounds; released in 2017)

Figure 9 PlayerUnknown's Battlegrounds (Taken from www.youtube.com)

Online gaming created a new form of communication in video games which was for the first time not between the player and the game, but between other players over the Internet who often do not know each other, sometimes even with multiple people at once.

3. Speech acts in video games

When a person starts playing a game, there are many factors that can affect whether the game will be interesting enough for the user. Different groups of players have different preferences and priorities in terms of game genres and mechanics and so the main goal of a developer, an individual or a studio, is to create a game that attracts and entertains a target group of players for an extended period of time.

For the developer to reach this goal, regardless of the genre, graphics, level of interactivity or target audience, the main goal is to communicate the necessary information to the player using many different ways such as visual guides, written instructions and dialogue or spoken word.

This communication between the developer and player is enclosed in the game itself because when the game reaches the player, the developer is separated from the gaming experience. Developers can furthermore release updates, write development blogs or communicate with their audience through social media, but this, as mentioned above, does not directly affect the gaming experience, so it will not be included in the analysis. From this perspective, we can conclude that the main communication is in fact between the game as designed by the developer and the player.

3.1 Types of classification of communication in video games

The communication can be classified based on a number of aspects. To the best of my knowledge, there are no well-established rules that could serve for the analysis of speech acts in video games; therefore, I propose my system of classification. The first instinct when the analysis of speech acts was presented to me was to primarily determine the addressor and addressee of utterances. However, after researching this topic, I have come across a research paper *Player–video game interaction: A systematic review of current concepts* by L. Caroux et al. (2015). It is a summary and subsequent analysis of data and results from 72 articles dealing with player-video game interaction. The main ideas are effectively categorised in the concept map in figure 10.

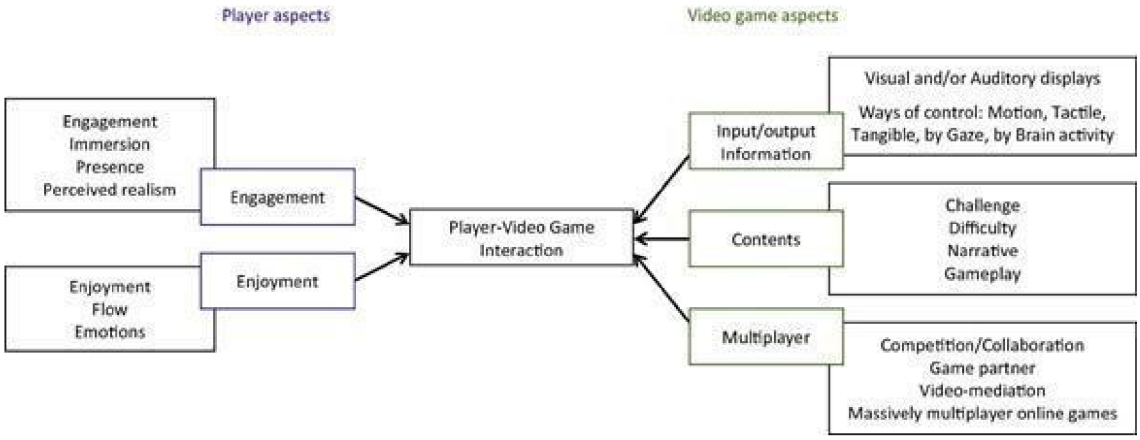

Figure 10 Concept map of Player-Video game Interaction (Caroux et al., 2015)

The main conclusion of this paper is that the different aspects of video games that can be analysed are very closely connected (Caroux et al., 2015). This can be demonstrated by looking at the player's immersion, which can be directly affected by the way the player controls the game, for example, controlling a racing game using a racing wheel. The player engagement and player enjoyment inspired an idea of analysis based on the purposes of speech acts in video games.

This seemed like a possible approach because speech acts can contribute to game immersion, presence, and emotional impact. However, due to the interconnectedness of all the different analysable aspects of video games, it was not possible to derive any specific categories that would carry similar speech act types, which was my main goal as it would help simplify the analysis. It turned out that the purpose of video game speech acts was more of an additional aspect than an appropriate method of classification. As none of the research papers presented a suitable foundation for the speech act analysis, I have decided to create my own *player/in-game element* based speech act classification.

3.2 Player/in-game element based speech act classification

Since there are many different types of utterances in video games, many of which do not even involve the player, we first need to specify the core elements of all interactions in video games:

- ***player*** - *P*erson controlling, reacting to and generally interacting with the game and other players. All speech acts in video games are communicating with the player with various levels of success.

- ***in-game element*** - An element of a game, created by the developer with the purpose of interacting with the player and therefore providing an opportunity for a speech act to be performed. The most common examples are: a playable character, a non-player character (NPC), a tutorial, game settings, tooltips, etc. (Not to be confused with the concept of *game element*, which is a wider abstraction containing the controls, a system of rules, graphics, story and also including the *in-game elements*. (Boller, 2013))

If we analyse the concept of in-game elements, we can arrive at the fact that it can potentially contain an infinite number of concepts as game developers are constantly creating new in-game elements. This fact, however, does not introduce much of a complication; the analysis will focus on the elements and the interactions which are most common. To express the direction of the utterance, the symbols → and ⇄ are used. All video game utterances can be divided into three main categories of speech acts:

3.2.1 Player ⇄ Player speech acts (P ⇄ P)

An utterance between two or more players in a video game which allows multiple people to play simultaneously. The three main ways of achieving this are by connecting to a public server (hosted by the game developer, a third-party host or by one of the players), by playing on a local area network (on a single Wi-Fi or Ethernet network) or by playing in person (on one gaming device using multiple controllers). In the first two contexts, the interaction is carried out by either an in-game chat (verbal or

written) or a third-party chat platform. When playing in person, the players are at the same location, therefore the interaction is carried out by an in-person dialogue.

As this class is not dissimilar to real live person-person utterances, the analysis will be brief, as it is possible to observe all types of speech acts as the following examples illustrate. These utterances were collected from my experience either playing video games or watching videos on YouTube, most of them are typical phrases, which can be observed by the common player.

- *Example of a representative:* "The other team definitely has at least one cheater." (Call of Duty; released 2003; a player informing his team about the possibility of a cheater in the opposing team)
- *Example of a directive:* "Let's rush B." (Counter-Strike; released 2012; a team leader ordering other players to quickly go and attack certain place on the map)
- *Example of commissive:* "If you f*ck this up, I am quitting." (Dota 2; released 2013; a player committing themselves to quit if the other player does not succeed[1])
- *Example of expressive:* "It feels nice to survive at least a minute." (PlayerUnknown's Battlegrounds; released 2017; a player indirectly ridiculing his opponent for dying too soon, the player in this example is expressing smugness)
- *Example of declaration:* "This tower shall be called The Watcher." (Minecraft; released 2011; a server leader names a tower they have just built, this form of an utterance can occur in a roleplay server, where the players are assigned different roles which are often exaggerated)

3.2.2 Player ⇄ In-game element speech acts (P ⇄ IE)

This category refers to an utterance between the player themselves and the in-game element. It should not be confused with an interaction between an in-game element and a playable character controlled by the player, which is in itself an in-game element. Most of the main categories of speech acts listed and described below are in

[1] Profanities in the player ⇄ player interaction are not uncommon

some way utilised in all video games. They have become a norm and are easily recognizable as the main purpose is to share important information about the game. To achieve this, most of these speech acts are direct. These categories share similar characteristics, serve similar purposes and share the same types of speech acts. The following types of interaction were selected based on frequent occurrence or uniqueness:

- ***tutorial → player:*** The purpose is to teach the player the basic controls and mechanics. It is situated usually at the beginning of the game and its completion is recommended to new players. It is not uncommon for a tutorial to be split into short parts, which can resemble tooltips. In some games, skipping the tutorial is a possibility. Tutorials can also use images or videos to show the player the correct way of playing. The most commonly used types of speech acts are directives, which directly tell the player what to do without any ambiguity. This is a crucial feature of tutorials because incorrect comprehension can lead to confusion of the player.
  - *Example of directive:* "Press SPACE to jump" (Tutorial directing the player to press the space button to perform the action of jumping.)

- ***settings → player:*** The purpose is to allow the player to customise different aspects of the game. It informs the player about different options of customising the graphics, controls, difficulty, or sound. Most frequently used types of speech acts are either representatives (when informing the player about the current state of a certain setting option) and directives (when telling the player to pick an option). They are generally direct. Similar properties also occur across other user interfaces.
  - *Example of representative:* "Display mode: Fullscreen" (Call of Duty 1; 2003; Representative speech act informing the player about the current display settings.)
  - *Example of directive:* "Choose a difficulty: Easy, normal, hard" (Call of Duty 1; 2003; Directive speech act requesting the player to pick a difficulty of the game.)

- ***player → settings:*** The interaction with settings is declarative, as it changes the property of the game. In special cases, the utterance can be also commissive, when the setting commits the player, for example, to play with a certain team but gives the player an opportunity to attack players in the same team. This is often done non-verbally.

- ***notifications and tooltips → player:*** The main purpose is to give the player some new information. They are not as important as tutorials, but in some cases can be crucial for further progress in the game. They are mainly representatives and on some special occasions directives.
  - *Example of representative and directive*: "Perform a silent kill by sneaking behind the enemy and pressing the attack button" (Utterance that can be classified as an indirect representative when it is not required to perform said action as the the tooltip only informs the player about the game mechanic, or a directive, when the game requires the player to perform said action.)
  - *Example of representative:* "A player has left the game" (Notification informing the player that another user has left the game.)

- ***Narrator → player***: Very uncommon interaction; most of the game narration is between the playable character and the narrator and not the player themselves. The narration can in most cases be classified as a tooltip in a spoken form, however, there are cases where the narrator, during the tooltip description, informs the player about the story and the in-game elements, such as enemies. The types of speech acts are typically representatives.

There is a special case that also belongs in the category Player ⇄ In-game element, which is a *fourth-wall breaking*. This is a form of communication where the playable character, NPC or the narrator acknowledges the fact that the player is playing a video game. This is the exact opposite of role playing as the addresser intentionally acts out of character and talks directly to the player about the game being just a game.

The speech acts can be of any type of illocutionary force and also direct and indirect. *The fourth wall breaking* occurs more commonly in films and tv shows.

- Example: “Make. It. Stop!” (Deadpool; released in 2013)(The playable character is in a conversation that irritates him and the player has an option to press a button to end the conversation. When the player chooses not to end the conversation for a longer period of time, the playable character gets slowly more annoyed and eventually starts directly telling the player to end the conversation, acknowledging that the player is in control of this mechanic and therefore is playing and controlling a game.)

3.2.3 In-game element ⇄ in-game element speech acts (IE ⇄ IE)

This category is the most common out of the three. In most games, the player is in a role of either a playable character or an interactor who communicates with other in-game objects such as NPCs.

The playable character is used in role-playing games, first-person shooters, platformers, and adventure games. They are usually in the form of either a human, creature, or an object. There are various levels of how the player reflects themselves in the character. On one end there are games with a playable character with a predefined personality, goals, and appearance. (e.g. Uncharted series; the main protagonist Nathan Drake is only controlled by the player). Games on the other end of the spectrum allow the player to project intentions, goals or personality onto the character. In some cases, the game even allows the player to change the appearance of the character. This allows the player to be more easily immersed in the character. (e.g. Skyrim; released in 2011; the player creates a character and plays the game in their own way).

The immersion and personalization can be expanded upon by allowing the player to have control over the characters' utterances. This can often serve as one of the major game mechanics, which is called a “dialogue tree”. It is a very powerful mechanic that can create diverse stories and allows the player to resolve dialogue problems in their own way. This may have in-game consequences which, again, allows the player to tailor the gaming experience. However, because the dialogue options are created by the

developers, they do not always provide the exact utterance the player desires. The dialogue options are usually represented by a single sentence or a short phrase that is supposed to summarise the essence of the utterance. In some cases it is difficult to create a short representation of a longer dialogue that would perfectly encapsulate the spirit of the conversation, therefore in some cases there is a possibility of the player choosing an option that will have a slightly different illocutionary force than the player intended. Another complication is the more time-consuming creation of a dialogue tree than a linear conversation and a greater difficulty creating a comprehensive story that can be changed by the player. The dialogue tree is heavily utilised in Life is Strange, which will be analysed in more detail in the following chapter.

The interactor is another way of allowing the player to interact with the game, without the use of playable characters. It is most frequently used in tycoon games, simulation games, strategy games and sports games. The interactor can either have specific characteristics (e.g. RollerCoaster Tycoon; released in 1999; the interactor is a theme park owner), or can be without personality and serve just as an in-game representation of the player interacting with the game (The Sims 2; released in 2004).

As video games are very diverse, these two main categories are not individually exclusive. In some games, the player controls a playable player and simultaneously controls the world around (e.g. Super Mario Maker; released in 2015). Another important detail to mention is that in some cases, the player can choose from multiple characters (Grand Theft Auto 5; released in 2013; player chooses between three individual playable characters). An example of these two special cases being included at once can be seen in soccer games, where the player controls multiple players at once and simultaneously manages and creates the team as the manager.

- ***Playable character(interactor) ⇄ non-player character (NPC)***: This interaction occurs in almost every game involving a playable character. The medium of this speech act is a dialogue in either a cutscene or in the game world. A cutscene is a scripted part of a game where the player has no control over the playable character or the interactor. It is similar to a short film sequence. Both of these forms of media can utilise “dialogue trees” or a linear dialogue. In open-world

games, the player can in some cases decide if to engage in the conversation or not. Dialogues can serve different purposes, such as immersion, story or game progression, etc. They can also be skipped in some cases, if the player chooses. These utterances are meant to simulate normal conversation, therefore speech acts can be either direct or indirect and can be of any type. Because of this fact, I have decided not to present examples for the *Playable character ⇄ NPC* category as it would not bear any new insights into speech acts in video games.

- ***Non-player character ⇄ non-player character*:** The types of speech acts are similar to the character ⇄ NPC interaction, as they also are meant to simulate a conversation and can also be of any type of speech act. The playable character is usually in the role of the overhearer and has minimal or no control over the conversation, only in some special cases can interrupt the conversation.

- ***Narrator → playable character(interactor*):** The narrator can be considered a special category of an NPC, but because the purpose is much more specific, it is important to make a distinction between the two. The purposes are mainly to develop the story, set a mood or to provide information to the player. The narrator can be the playable character themselves in the present, from the past or the future or an individual character. It is important to mention that there are instances, where the line between the addressee of these utterances is blurred and the interpretation is up to the player. Most common speech acts are representatives, but other speech acts such as expressives are not excluded.
  - *Example of representative:* "I was heading back to the hideout when suddenly I had this funny feeling." (Call of Juarez: Gunslinger; released 2013) (Before this dialogue, the player watches a cutscene, where the playable character, in this instance a self-proclaimed famous cowboy, is discussing his many famous deeds. After this, the player appears in one of those events that already happened and the playable character in a role of a narrator delivering dialogue from a different time period. This is an example, where the dialogue can be directed towards the player themselves.)

- ***Playable character ⇄ playable character:*** This category of utterance is in form of intrapersonal communication, mostly self-talk and inner speech of the playable character with predefined personality traits and emotions, ideas and motives specific to the character. In literature, internal dialogue can be classified as either direct, when the adressor expresses the internal utterance in the first person without the author(developer), or indirect, when the internal utterance is expressed not by the character itself but is delivered in a third person, such as "he thought" (Luebering, 2020). In video games, the internal monologue is mostly direct as the inner speech is delivered in most cases by the playable character and is usually not narrated from the third person. However, if we analyse the internal communication based on the directness of speech acts, one can identify these utterances as in most cases direct. This is because as the addressor and addressee of these utterances is the same person, there is no need to *hide* any meaning; to be indirect. It is important to emphasise that this Playable character ⇄ playable character interaction serves mostly the purpose of communicating information to the player in an effective way without breaking the immersion. Therefore, a possibility of a 2 level analysis (In-game element ⇄ In-game element ⇄ player) would seem appropriate. However, as the goal of every interaction with an in-game element is to communicate the necessary information to the player, these interactions (Playable character ⇄ playable character) still fall in the category of an In-game element ⇄ in-game element. The analysis of this category will hoverew also include the intended purpose of these utterances. There are many different purposes such as communicating thoughts, emotions, motivations and thinking processes of the character. It can also be used for character development, to increase tension, to set the mood or to uncover an inner conflict in the mind of the character. Nowadays, inner speech is used in many different genres such as first-person shooters, RPG games and many others but the most common use is in adventure games that focus on the story and character development such as Life Is Strange (released in 2015), which will be analysed in more detail in the following chapter.

- *Example of representative:* “There's the lighthouse…” (Life Is Strange, 2015) (The playable character is having an internal monologue about the surroundings, in this case, the character spots a familiar lighthouse. This utterance primarily informs the player about the character's place of interest and secondarily it points out the location of this place.)
- *Example of directive: “*Please let me make it there…” (Life Is Strange, 2015; The playable character is in a dangerous situation and tells the environment using an internal monologue to allow her to reach a safe location. This utterance informs the player about the character's wants and indirectly guides the player towards a specific goal, in this example to reach a safe spot. It also indirectly informs the player about the difficulty of the task.)
- *Example of expressive:* “Whoa! No!” (Life Is Strange, 2015) (The playable character expresses shock and fear in a moment of danger by shouting for oneself.)
- *Example of commissive:* “Oh, yes, Victoria, I'll get your bony ass out of my way. (Life Is Strange, 2015) (After the playable character is denied access to a building by an NPC called Victoria, who is blocking the way, the playable character promises to oneself to get inside by forcing Victoria to move out of the way. This utterance explains to the player the thoughts of the character and also indirectly steers the players actions towards the goal of the character.)

4. Comparison of speech acts in Life Is Strange and Call of Duty

In this chapter, the focus will be on the analysis of speech acts in video games Life Is Strange and Call of Duty. These games were selected based on their numerous differences in gameplay mechanics, story, and means of communicating with the player. Life Is Strange was picked mainly for its complex dialogue system consisting of a dialogue tree allowing the player to choose different utterances and therefore different ways of how the story evolves. Call of Duty was chosen for its simple, linear dialogue which contrasts with Life Is Strange and will serve to highlight the differences between speech acts in different genres of video games.

4.1 Life Is Strange

Life Is Strange is a video game developed by Dontnod Entertainment and published by Square Enix for PC, PlayStation 4, and Xbox consoles episodically from January to October 2015. The genre is a story-based adventure game in the third person with a heavy emphasis on player choices that affect the story.

4.1.1 Gameplay mechanics

The player controls a character called Max Caulfield, an academy student who suddenly obtains the ability to rewind time. This gameplay mechanic is heavily utilised to solve small puzzles or to pick different dialogue options. The player is often located in a small area, where one is free to walk around and interact with the surroundings. The player can inspect or communicate with different non-player characters by either directly talking to them in the game world or by using an in-game mobile phone. One can also inspect or interact with different game objects such as pictures, computers, flowers, and others which can have an impact on the environment and story in the future. The game contains a vast number of readable objects such as notes, newspapers, and posters, which allow the player to discover background information about the world, story, and characters. The game has a deliberately slower pace to allow the

player to get immersed in the world, atmosphere, and story. This is further enhanced by the time rewind mechanic which allows the player to try different dialogue choices and to choose the preferred option. It is not possible to rewind time entirely, but only to some extent, usually up to a checkpoint generated automatically by the game. Some of the dialogue options, usually occurring at the end of the chapter or at an important moment in the story, cannot be rewound and usually have a significant impact on the further development of the story. This usually puts pressure on the player to pick the preferred option and these options have a permanent effect carried through the rest of the game.

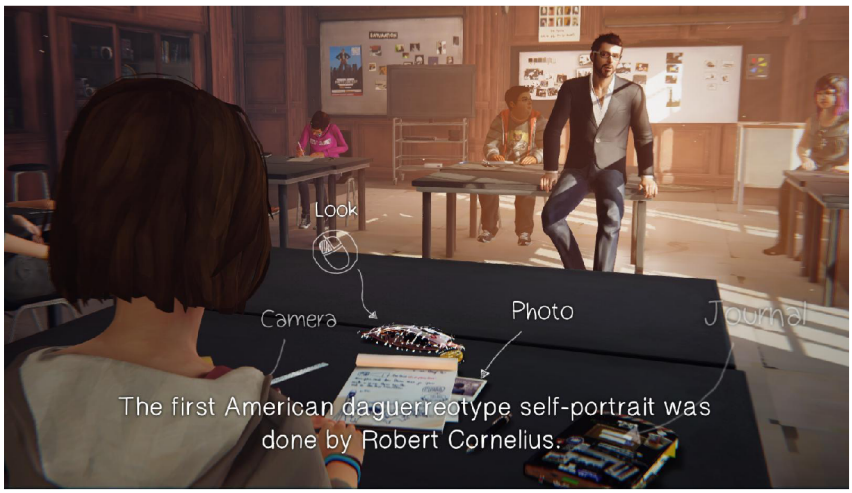

Figure 11 Gameplay screenshot from Life is Strange

4.1.2 Story

The game takes place in the fictional town of Arcadia Bay in Oregon. The main protagonist Max Caufield suddenly has a vision of a tornado destroying the city which grants her the ability to rewind time. After this, Max sees her childhood friend Chloe Price get shot in the school bathroom and rewinds time to change the past and save her. Chloe explains to Max that she is trying to find her missing friend Rachel Amber.

The first chapter serves mostly as an introduction to the story, setting, and characters and ends with Max revealing her powers to Chloe. The rest of the main plot focuses on the investigation of the disappearance of Rachel and the relationship between Max and Chloe and other characters. Several small subplots occur throughout the game to develop the story and to put the player in front of difficult moral choices.

The second chapter, for example, deals with a character Kate Marsh being bullied where the player's choices can have an impact on the development of her mental state and the subsequent events, where Kate tries to commit suicide.

4.1.3 Analysis of speech acts in Life Is Strange

The following transcript is from the very first part of the game from a mission called Nightmare. This part of the game was picked because, unlike the first mission of Call of Duty, it allows us to demonstrate all the important storytelling devices in a short section of the game. The decision to choose the beginning seems fitting as it is not necessary for the reader to have any previous knowledge about the events of the game. The following transcripts were transcripted directly from the game by myself.

Lighthouse: on-screen text **((P ⇄ IE; notification → player)**

> Life Is Strange is a story based game that features player choice, the consequences of all your in game actions will impact the past, present and future. Choose wisely…

At the very beginning of the first chapter of the game, the message appears in the centre of the screen. It is an example of an **P ⇄ IE**, specifically a **notification → player** which informs the player about the game mechanics. The same message is displayed at the beginning of every chapter as a reminder to make the player more conscious of their choices. The statement, however, is not completely true as not all the in-game actions impact the game. The player is being deliberately misled in order to achieve more immersion and also to over exaggerate the mechanics of the game. This speech act is a **direct representative** as it informs the player and also its true/false value can be established. At the end, it is possible to observe a **direct directive** "Choose wisely…"

In this part of the game, one can observe the lack of any other on-screen text, not even a tutorial. This design decision is very uncommon and when the tutorial is absent, the player can be confused as to how to control the game. When the player feels like one does not have proper control over the game and can become irritated or angry and when this issue is at the beginning of the game, it can create a bad first impression. The

designers of Life Is Strange made this decision to create more immersion and the developers trusted the player to have general knowledge about basic control schemes which was successful in this case.

Lighthouse: dialogue **(IE ⇄ IE; playable character ⇄ playable character)**

> Max: (thinking) Where am I? What's happening? [gets up] I'm trapped in a storm? How did I get here? ...and where is "here"?
> Max: (thinking) Wait... There's the lighthouse... I'll be safe if I can make it there... I hope... Please let me make it there...
> Max: Holy shit.
> Max: Whoa! No!

Max wakes up and finds herself lying on the ground near a lighthouse in her hometown. A storm is raging, and a tornado is heading straight towards Arcadia Bay. As Max regains consciousness, she thinks "Where am I? What's happening? I'm trapped in a storm? How did I get here? ...and where is "here"?" This dialogue is only delivered to the player by the voice of Max's consciousness and it is the case for all of the dialogue in Max's mind. This is the main device for conveying the feelings and thoughts of the character and it is present very often throughout the game. From her expressions and inner dialogue, it is obvious that she is confused. This mirrors the player's thoughts as a person, who has not played the game before does not know what exactly is happening. This helps the player get easily immersed in the character as the game (through Max`s thoughts) explicitly asks similar questions that the player might be thinking. It is an **IE ⇄ IE**, specifically **playable character ⇄ playable character** category. The utterances "Where am I? What's happening? I'm trapped in a storm? How did I get here? ...and where is "here"?" is a question that expresses surprise, disbelief and confusion. They are not meant to be answered, but the producer makes clear that he/she does not know the answer and wants it.

As Max looks around, she recognizes her location. The utterance "Wait... There's the lighthouse... I'll be safe if I can make it there... I hope... Please let me make it there…" suggests to the player what he/she should do as, after this line of dialogue, the player takes control of Max. From the tone of her voice and from the „I hope..."part of the dialogue, the player is aware that Max is in a stressful and dangerous situation. This sentence has multiple illocutionary forces:

Representative: "There's the lighthouse... I'll be safe if I can make it there…" (direct)

- Utterance informing about the location. This internal dialogue primarily informs the player about the character's place of interest and secondarily it points out the location of this place.

*Expressive: "*Please let me make it there…" (indirect)

- Max indirectly expresses her feelings of fear and uncertainty towards her situation which are passed to the player.

*Directive: "*Please let me make it there…" (direct)

- Max wants the surroundings to let her reach the lighthouse. This utterance informs the player about the character's wants and guides towards a safe spot.

As the player walks closer to the lighthouse, the camera pans towards the tornado slowly destroying the town. Max, in shock, utters "Holy shit." expressing her disbelief over the seemingly unbelievable events. A boat appears in the air, picked by the tornado, and crashes to the lighthouse destroying a part of it. As Max looks up, an upper part of the building starts falling in her direction, hence the sudden reaction "Whoa! No!" Both of these self-talk utterances are speech acts in the category of **direct expressives** that fall in the category of an **IE ⇄ IE**, specifically **playable character ⇄ playable character**. These expressives also intend to convey and pass the emotions to the player.

Jefferson's Lecture: on-screen text and the following dialogue **(IE ⇄ IE; playable character ⇄ playable character)**

Pencil Case

Look: I cant believe I still have this pencil case. I should upgrade to the 21st century.

Journal

Look: I haven't kept up my journal as much as I would.

Read: October. My favorite month. The best weather of the year. I love watching the leaves change color, turning into tiny flames. But it's still too damn hot (thanks global warming) and I cant bust out the big coats and sweaters or scary movies yet. Soon. Kate let me borrow "the October County" by Ray Bradbury.

I haven't read much by him (which caused Warren to almost revoke my geek cred before I held up my copy of "Battle Royale") but he nails the autumn atmosphere of small towns. The last time I wore a Halloween costume was with Chloe… I have pictures in one of my old albums…

I should find a real Halloween party to crash so I can experience some social mingling. It's that or a Vortex club strokefest swimming party. Or is that backstrokefest? You so punny, Max.

At least I'm trying to climb out of my cocoon. I shouldn't expect my life to completely change after a few weeks of Blackwell Academy. As my parents love telling me on a loop, "You have all the time in the world."

Photo

Look: "Look at this crap! How can I show this to Mr. Jefferson? I can hear the classroom laughing at me now."

Bag

Look: My little camera bag is battered, but still kicking.

Camera

Look: I do love my analog camera. I should take a quick picture now.
Take a selfie: (starts a dialogue *selfie*)

After the events of the first part of the first level, Max wakes up in the classroom. The player is located at a school desk and is surrounded by interactable objects belonging to Max. It is possible to interact with them as some have only one option and others have more. All of the objects are highlighted by an arrow pointing towards them and a drawing of a mouse is near the object, which displays the button used to interact with in-game objects. This guides the player into engaging in the interaction. In many instances, when the player wants to interact with an in-game object, a text appears, informing the player about the possible options of interaction, one of the examples is "Look" and "Read" which are an example of a **P ⇄ IE**, specifically **tooltip > player**. These utterances are **representative** and can be interpreted as "You can choose this option to initiate *Look* (or any other) interaction with this object", therefore it is in my opinion a tooltip that informs the player about possible interaction rather than a directive.

A non-player character called Mr. Jefferson discusses a topic which will be analysed below, when the player tries to look at any of the objects, the dialogue of the NPC is not interrupted but is just overlayed by the playable characters' inner thoughts expressed by a spoken word. This indicates to the player that the inspection of different objects in the level does not interrupt the dialogue in the background. For example, the player can choose to look at the journal, which starts a dialogue "I haven't kept up my journal as much as I would." This and all the interactions initiated by choosing the option "Look" fall in the category of **IE ⇄ IE**, specifically **playable character ⇄ playable character**. In this case, it is a **direct representative** discussing the character's relationship with the diary. The inclusion of other types is also possible such as expressives or directives, but they are not as common.

Another example of a “Look” interaction is with the camera. The dialogue “I do love my analog camera. I should take a quick picture now.” falls in the category of a **direct expressive** and in this case, it guides the player to do a certain action, specifically to pick an option to take a selfie. It can also be considered a directive. This internal dialogue guiding the player is used quite often in this game, it does not break the immersion as most of those dialogues feel natural and they are quite helpful.

When the player chooses to read the journal, the game transitions to the journal part of the game which is a simulation of written notebook entries by the main protagonist. The purpose of this is to immerse the player in the story and to explain interpersonal relationships between characters that were not obvious from the in-game interactions. Throughout the game, that player is free to open the journal at any given time to read the individual entries, either new or older, to familiarise with the background story and the feelings and thoughts of Max. This journal entry introduces the character of Chloe, who will appear later in the game, and also it slowly uncovers the character of Max as a quirky, introverted young woman, who has just enrolled in the Blackwell academy. Even though the main purpose is to inform the player, the producer is still Max to herself, therefore it is again a case of an **IE ⇄ IE**, specifically a **playable character ⇄ playable character**. Speech acts that can be observed are mostly direct and they are **representatives** “I haven't read much by him” and **expressives** such as “I love watching the leaves change colour, turning into tiny flames.”

Jefferson's Lecture: dialogue **(IE ⇄ IE; NPC → playable character, playable character ⇄ playable character)**

Max: *(thinking)* Whoa! That was so surreal.
Mr. Jefferson: Alfred Hitchcock famously called film, "little pieces of time" but he could be talking about photography, as he likely was.
Max: *(thinking)* Okay... I'm in class...
Max: *(thinking)* Everything's cool... I'm okay...
Mr. Jefferson: These pieces of time can frame us in our glory and our sorrow; from light to shadow; from color to chiaroscuro...
Mr. Jefferson: Now, can you give me an example of a photographer who perfectly captured the human condition in black and white? Anybody? Bueller?
Max: *(thinking)* I didn't fall asleep, and... that sure didn't feel like a dream... Weird.
Victoria: Diane Arbus.
(Part of dialogue is excluded)

When Max wakes up from her nightmare, many thoughts such as “Whoa! That was so surreal.”, “Okay... I'm in class…” Everything's cool... I'm okay…” and “I didn't fall asleep, and... that sure didn't feel like a dream…Weird.” run through her head. They are again an interpersonal communication in Max's head, and they are about the dream she just woke up from. The “Whoa!” is a **direct expressive** conveying Max's sudden awakening. Other speech acts are either representatives, expressives, or both. For example, the “that sure didn't feel like a dream…Weird.” expresses the feelings of the protagonist and also shares the attributes of the dream/vision.

As thoughts are running through her head, the professor Mr. Jefferson discusses the history of photography. This dialogue runs parallel to her thoughts and in a few instances can be somewhat overshadowed if the player does not pay enough attention to it. The dialogue “Alfred Hitchcock famously called film, "little pieces of time" but he could be talking about photography, as he likely was.” is a **direct representative** and falls in the category of **IE ⇄ IE**, specifically **NPC → playable character** (as a part of the class). In the conversation led by Mr. Jefferson, we can observe an **indirect directive** “Now, can you give me an example of a photographer who perfectly captured the human condition in black and white?”. The professor wants someone to give him the answer to his question, but does not direct anyone to do it. It would not be appropriate in this situation as teachers and professors do not usually force the students to answer questions they might not know the answer to as the discussed topic is new to them, also, it is not a genuine request for information, as he/she already knows the answer. Therefore, the utterance is delivered indirectly in the form of a question asking the students about their ability to give him an example, but one does not want to hear the direct answer “Yes” or “No”. The following utterance “Diane Arbus.” is the requested answer and it is **direct representative**.

<u>After taking a selfie:</u> **(IE ⇄ IE; NPC ⇄ playable character)**

> Mr. Jefferson: Shh, I believe Max has taken what you kids call a "selfie"... A dumb word for a wonderful photographic tradition. And Max... has a gift. Of course, as you all know, the photo portrait has been popular since the early 1800's. Your generation was not the first to use images for "selfie-expression." Sorry. I couldn't resist. The point remains that the portraiture has always been a vital aspect of art, and photography, for as long as it's been around. Now, Max, since you've captured our interest and clearly want to join the conversation, can you please tell us the name of the process that gave birth to the first self-portraits?

Dialogue option 1: You're asking me?

Max: You're asking me? Let me think... Um…

Dialogue option 2: I did know…

Max: I did know! ...But I kinda forgot.

Mr. Jefferson: You either know this or not, Max. Is there anybody here who knows their stuff?

Victoria: Louis Daguerre was a French painter who created "daguerreotypes" a process that gave portraits a sharp reflective style, like a mirror. Now you're totally stuck in the Retro Zone. Sad face.

(Part of dialogue is excluded)

When the player chooses the option to take a photo with a polaroid, a cutscene starts playing where Mr. Jefferson talks about Max. Here it is possible to observe several types of speech acts.

Representative: "I believe Max has taken what you kids call a "selfie"" (direct)

- Mr. Jefferson informs the class about the actions of the main protagonist and about the name of said phenomena.

*Representative: "*and clearly want to join the conversation" (indirect)

- Mr. Jefferson indirectly points out that Max has not been conversing and that she is not currently interested. This fact is delivered by an utterance which without context would indicate that Max actually wants to join the conversation.

Expressive: "Sorry. I couldn't resist." (direct)

- Mr. Jefferson apologises in a slightly demeaning way for pointing out that teenagers nowadays think that they are the first ones to take a self-portrait.

Directive: "can you please tell us the name of the process that gave birth to the first self-portraits?" (indirect)

- This speech act is identical to the previously discussed sentence "Now, can you give me an example of a photographer who perfectly captured the human condition in black and white?". This method of redressing directives in the form of questions is very common in the English language.

After this, the player gets for the first time the option to pick a dialogue option. The text that the player can pick faithfully represents what is subsequently uttered by Max. This, however, is not always the case as some of the dialogue options can be slightly confusing and the following utterance will not correspond to the expected utterance. If the player picks either of those options, it has no effect on the following

conversation. Further in the level, after Max rewinds time back to this moment, the player already knows the correct answer is “Louis Daguerre” and therefore it is then possible to pick this dialogue option and change the course of the conversation.

In the background, the player can spot a student Kate getting bullied by a member of a popular school group, who throws a paper ball in her face. Even though other students saw this event, none of them reacted negatively. This is the first instance where the player finds out about Kate slightly depressed about being bullied which also sets the tone for the events of the next chapter, where Kate tries to commit suicide and the player has a chance to save her without being able to use Max’s rewind powers.

Optional Conversation with Kate **(IE ⇄ IE; NPC ⇄ playable character)**

Max: Hi, Kate.
Kate: Oh, hi Max.
Dialogue option 1: I hope I didn't embarrass you…
Max: Kate, I hope I didn't embarrass you with my lame answer.
Kate: It sucks to be dragged into the spotlight.
Max: Unless you're Victoria.
Kate: She's got nothing on you, Max. Well, I should get going.
Max: Yeah, me too. Talk to you later.
Kate: Sure.
Dialogue option 2: You seem quiet today.
Max: You seem quiet today.
Kate: Just thinking too much…
Dialogue option 2.A: Victoria has already won…
Max: I think Victoria has already won the contest... As usual.
Kate: She's got nothing on you, Max. Well, I should get going.
Max: Yeah, me too. Talk to you later.
Kate: Sure.
Dialogue option 2.B: Want to grab a cup o' tea?
Max: I hear that. Want to go grab a cup o' tea and bitch about life?
Kate: Thanks, but not today. I have to go over homework.
Max: No worries. Let's hang later.
Kate: Sure.

Later, the player can walk around the classroom, inspect different objects, or talk to other students. When the player chooses to talk to Kate, a dialogue with multiple dialogue options that branch into others is present. This dialogue has consequences, because if the player chooses to talk to Kate, it will have positive consequences, the same applies to Max choosing to invite Kate to a cup of tea.

This part of dialogue is included only to highlight this dialogue mechanic and the fact that dialogue options can have positive or negative impact on the story. I have decided not to analyse the speech acts in this segment, because they are all examples of an **IE ⇄ IE**, specifically **NPC ⇄ playable character**. This category, as mentioned previously, simulates a real-life conversation which consists of all types of speech acts and therefore no new insights about speech acts in video games can be observed.

4.2.3 Summary

Life Is Strange is a story-based adventure game with sprawling dialogue options that affect the story. Because of this, the game is expected to consist of many ways of communicating with the player. The gameplay mechanic of rewinding time creates a wide variety of conversations as the player can gain additional knowledge from the future, which he then can utilise to change the course of the conversation that had already happened before the time rewind. The density of utterances, further enhanced by the rewind mechanic, is omnipresent, this results in the gameplay being not more than a device that compliments the dialogue and progresses the story. Speech acts wary widely, the intrapersonal dialogue of Max's thoughts is mostly direct with a few exceptions. They can be representatives when the playable character talks with herself about the world around her, expressives conveying her feelings or directives towards herself or the world. They obviously do not and cannot receive any response, but they are mostly used to let the player know about the thoughts of Max. Another common category of utterances are conversations between two NPCs or a dialogue between an NPC and the playable character. These utterances represent normal conversation so the speech acts can be of any type, however, the occurrence of declaratives is sparse.

4.2 Call of Duty

Call of Duty is a video game developed by Infinity Ward and published in 2003 by Activision for Microsoft Windows and later ported to other consoles and operating systems such as PlayStation 3, Xbox 360, and Mac OS X. The genre is a first-person shooter mainly focused on a single-player campaign set in the environment of the Second World War.

4.2.1 Gameplay mechanics

The main gameplay mechanics consists of progressing through missions while fighting and eliminating enemies using a variety of weapons such as pistols, machine guns, rifles, grenades, rocket launchers or a knife. In most missions, the player is accompanied by a number of friendly non-player characters, mostly soldiers that help the player as the game tries to simulate a realistic battlefield. In comparison to modern first-person shooter games, the gameplay in Call of Duty (2003) is not too diverse as the majority of the game takes place on the battlefield whereas newer games often include different types of gameplay such as controlling vehicles or planes, quick-time events where the player must swiftly hit prompt on the screen and more. The environments vary from very linear missions, where the player fights in tight corridors to more open, but still linear spaces such as towns and battlefields. The player always follows a single objective, which upon completion leads to another. The game offers a multiplayer mode, in which different players connect to a server and fight against each other.

Figure 12 Gameplay screenshot from Call of Duty

4.2.2 Story

The story follows real events of the Second World War, but with fictional characters, and is split into twenty-six missions, which are divided into three main campaigns. The first campaign follows an American soldier Private Martin and his journey from his training, followed by his participation as a paratrooper in Operation Overlord and ending with Martin successfully helping to stop the last big German offensive. In the second campaign, the player is in the role of a British soldier Sergeant Jack Evans. He and his unit led by Captain Price again fight against the germans, for example destroying the enemy ship and assisting allied assault on a German city of Burgsteinfurt. In the last campaign, the player controls a volunteer Soviet soldier Alexei Voronin. His story starts in the Battle of Stalingrad, later defending the Red Army outpost as a sniper and in the final mission of the game, storming Berlin and finally the Reichstag building, raising the Soviet Victory Banner and ending the Second World War in Europe.

4.2.3 Transcript:

The following transcript is from the first minutes of the second mission of the game called Pathfinder. The first mission served as a tutorial, which explained important game mechanics such as aiming, shooting, throwing grenades, and crawling. The decision to not analyse the first level was because it does not include one of the more interesting story-building devices called briefings. Otherwise, the tutorial level and the following mission generally consist of the same type of speech acts such as declaratives, directives and expressives. A decision to not include the whole level was made because it was deemed not necessary as all the basic types of utterances are highlighted from the first minutes of the level. The following transcripts were transcribed directly from the game by myself.

Briefing: ***(*IE ⇄ IE; NPC → playable character)**

> Foley: Baker Company, listen up. This is the big one. Operation Overlord: the air and seaborne invasion of Normandy. On H-hour D-Day, seaborne infantry will attack five beaches codenamed Utah, Omaha, Gold, Juno, and Sword here on the coast of Normandy. Utah and Omaha beaches will be attacked by three of our infantry divisions. At the same time, two British and one Canadian division will hit Gold, Juno, and Sword beaches. The airborne will be landing six

> hours before H-hour, before the air and naval bombardments. The British 6th Airborne Division will be landing here, at the same time the 101st and the 82nd Airborne will be landing in these areas. The Douve River estuary here divides Utah and Omaha Beach. The mission of the 101st is to capture the Douve River crossings linking Utah and Omaha Beach, and to protect the flanks of Utah Beach. This road here is the main highway that connects the entire Cotentin Peninsula. The Germans have troop concentrations in this region. When these troops are mobilized into a counterattack on the beaches, they'll have to move along this road. The 101st is going to make sure this doesn't happen. Baker Company, that's us, has been assigned this causeway here. The pathfinders like Private Martin will be dropped ahead of the main force and plant beacons on the ground to mark the landing zones. However, there is no telling what will happen once we're on the ground, so I want all of you to learn the objectives of every unit in both the 101st and 82nd. I also want you to study these maps and photographs until you've memorized them. We'll be landing behind the Atlantic Wall, between several German garrisons. We can't expect to be relieved until several hours after H-hour. This is what we've been training for. Good luck.

A briefing is a storytelling device located at the very beginning of levels that follow real events of the Second World War. Generally, it is a simulation of a real-life briefing, which in this case discusses a battlefield situation. In Call of Duty, this part of the game serves as a loading screen with visuals and audio in the form of a slideshow presentation. The player has no control, only the option to skip to the next part of the game. In this mission, the briefing is held by Captain Foley explains to the parachute infantry regiment called Baker company (which the playable character Private Martin is a part of) the Operation Overlord. Even though this information is not necessary for the gameplay, it immerses the player in the upcoming events and helps the player with roleplaying more effectively as one will get more familiar with the story and situation. The briefing consists mostly of **direct representatives** with a few occasional **direct directives and expressives** that fall into the category of **IE ⇄ IE**, specifically **NPC → playable character** (as a member of the Baker company). Most speech acts are direct, which is expected as the essence of the briefing is to convey information as effectively and straightforwardly as possible.

Directive: “Baker Company, listen up.” (direct)

- The captain addresses the parachute infantry to get their attention.

Directive: “I want all of you to learn the objectives of every unit in both the 101st and 82nd.” (indirect)

- The captain commands the infantry to study important battle plans by expressing his wants.

Representative: "On H-hour D-Day, seaborne infantry will attack five beaches codenamed Utah, Omaha, Gold, Juno, and Sword here on the coast of Normandy." (direct)

- The captain gives the infantry an important insight about the following battle plans.

Expressive: "Good luck." (direct)

- The captain expresses his wishes of good luck to his infantry.

Preloader: **(IE ⇄ IE; playable character ⇄ playable character)**

> An entry in Pvt. Martin's diary:
> June 5, 1944 - 1800 Hours
> Greenham Common, England
> In about three hours, I will be in Normandy. As one of the pathfinders for my unit, I'll be landing ahead of the main airborne force. The pathfinders land before the main force and place beacons on the landing fields, to guide the rest of the pilots and paratroopers in.
> The brass are sending the airborne in first, in the early hours of the morning, to protect the flanks of Utah beach. At first light, the main force of the invasion will hit the beaches.
> For weeks, the entire invasion force, more than 175,000 men, has been cooped up and forbidden contract with anyone outside, with nothing to do but memorize maps and battle plans. We're all quite eager to be in France.
> A few hours ago, General Eisenhower paid us a visit. If we pull all this off, the Germans are in for one hell of a surprise.

Preloader is a storytelling device in the form of written documents that occur in almost every level of this game. They are present at the beginning of the mission after a briefing when it is present. These documents can have different forms, some examples include secret documents or letters given to the protagonists, a map with scribbled notes, or in this case an entry in Martin's diary. The preloaders, as opposed to the briefings, do not include any spoken words. The content varies, but generally, the purpose is again to either inform about the following events and to get the player more involved in the story. The preloader is, however, more personal, the documents are in most cases private property of the playable character, which again helps the player get

immersed in the character. Speech acts are **direct representatives** with a few **direct expressives and direct commissives** that fall in the category of **IE ⇄ IE**, specifically **playable character ⇄ playable character** in the form of a text written to oneself. The inclusion of indirect speech acts would not make much sense as it has been established, in the category of playable character ⇄ playable character, the receiver is the same person, and indirectness is unnecessary.

Representative: "In about three hours, I will be in Normandy." (direct)

- The playable character is writing down notes about planned attack on Normandy, this information is passed to the player and serves the purpose of letting one know about the events and also helping the player get more immersed in the situation.

*Expressive: "*We're all quite eager to be in France." (direct)

- The playable character expresses impatience and anxiousness. This is not necessarily meant to be passed to the player, but it help with immersion and showcases the general feeling the paratroopers were experiencing during this time.
- *Commissive:* "If we pull all this off, the Germans are in for one hell of a surprise." (direct)
- The playable character commits oneself to surprise the enemy side on the battlefield, if the invasion of Normandy goes according to the plan.

Pathfinder mission: On-screen text *(***P ⇄ IE; notification → player, tutorial → player, tooltip → player)**

Outskirts of Ste. Mère Eglise, France
JUNE 5, 1944
2330 hrs
Objective updated
Game saved
Press [Tab] to see your objectives.
The star on your compass marks your next objective
Press your Objectives key [Tab] to see what your next objective is.
Picked up ammo for the Kar98k

Pathfinder mission: dialogue *(***IE ⇄ IE; NPC → playable character, NPC ⇄ NPC)**

American Paratrooper 1: Move out! Secure the perimeter!
American Paratrooper 2: You guys, over here! By the wall! Defensive positions, get down!
"Aaaa"

“Ooch”
"Achtung! Granate!"
"Amerikanische Infanterie!”

The game, as almost all games nowadays, consists of many on-screen messages with numerous purposes. They are usually directed towards the player and are a form of a notification, tooltip or a tutorial. The level starts with the information about the location, date, and time of day of the mission. (“Outskirts of Ste. Mère Eglise, France, JUNE 5, 1944, 2330 hrs”) This is an example of an **P ⇄ IE**, specifically a **notification → player**. This category usually consists of **direct representatives**, which is also true in this case.

Following this, the player is allowed to control the character of Martin, who is a pathfinder for his squad (a person who is entrusted to plant beacons on the ground to mark the landing zones for a paratrooper unit). The bottom left part of the screen displays small information that is not necessary to pay attention to. Immediately after the start of the level, a message “Objective updated” and “Game saved” appears. Later in the mission, when a player walks over an enemy gun or an ammo box, a message “Picked up ammo for the Kar98k” appears. These short pieces of information are again an example of an **P ⇄ IE**, specifically a **notification → player**. They are again **direct representatives**.

As the player moves near a house, he/she spots a German soldier. Most enemies produce a variety of screams and shouts when dying or being shot. In this case, the sound “Ooch” can be heard. Other dying sounds can be heard throughout the game and they can be classified as **direct expressives**, expressing a feeling of pain, in the category of **IE ⇄ IE**, specifically **NPC → playable character**.

During the gameplay, messages such as “Press [Tab] to see your objectives.” and “The star on your compass marks your next objective” appear in the centre of the screen, tutoring the player about new game mechanics. Other messages of this type appear, but I have decided not to include them, even though they share different information, their essence is the same. They fall in the category of **P ⇄ IE** and are a

tutorial → player. The "Press [Tab] to see your objectives." is a **direct directive** telling the player to press a button, and also an **indirect representative** as it informs the player what and how he/she can do this action. This information is later followed by "Press your Objectives key [Tab] to see what your next objective is." This is an example of a **P ⇄ IE**, specifically **tooltip → player**. A repetition of tutorial messages is often utilised to properly teach the player important mechanics, in this case, however, it also serves as a device to guide the player towards discovering the next objective instead of explicitly displaying the objective on the screen. Because it does not provide any new information, it is classified as a tooltip. The message "The star on your compass marks your next objective" is an example of a **direct representative**.

During the mission, the player spots and kills two soldiers in a bunker. As the player approaches the bunker, it is possible to hear them talking in German. This is used to alert the player about possible danger, and it is used on many occasions throughout the game. Due to the lack of a transcript on the internet and my lack of understanding German language, I was unable to include the exact content of this conversation. However, it falls in the category of **IE ⇄ IE**, specifically **NPC ⇄ NPC**. As this category in substance simulates a conversation between two people, any type of speech act is possible.

After the confrontation in the bunker, the player enters a field and places a beacon for the paratroopers. In a moment, Martins is met with his squad, which is immediately attacked by German soldiers from a building near the field. Random American Paratroopers shout "Move out! Secure the perimeter!" and "You guys, over here! By the wall! Defensive positions, get down!" They inform Martins and therefore the player to move from the empty field, where the enemies have a clear shot on the player and tell Martin to hide by the wall. This is an example of **IE ⇄ IE**, specifically **NPC ⇄ playable character**. It is a **direct directive**, which simultaneously teaches the player to listen to commands because if the instructions are not followed, the playable character is killed.

Another type of utterances that are often present are alerts from enemies such as "Achtung! Granate!". The English translation is “Beware, grenade!” They are intentionally designed to be slightly unrealistic and serve a purpose of alerting the player about the enemy actions. In this example, when the player throws a grenade, an enemy, when he/she notices the grenade, always shouts, and runs to safety. This tells the player that the enemy is probably still alive; if otherwise, the enemy will shout “Aaaa” which indicates that. Throughout the game, many such alerts are present which almost always hints either the enemy’s presence or their actions. If one analyses the utterance "Achtung! Granate!" from a perspective of a direct adressor and a direct addressee, this is an example of an **IE ⇄ IE** specifically **NPC ⇄ NPC**. The type of speech act is a **direct directive** towards other German soldiers to pay attention and to run to safety from the grenade.

4.2.3 Summary

Most speech acts in Call of Duty are direct as dialogue is sparse and the military environment encourages straightforwardness and directness in general. Call of Duty, in comparison with Life Is Strange, is much more gameplay based and so the dialogue does not play a big role. This is the case with many games of this type; however, even though the amount of dialogue is not vast, the game still uses several effective methods of communicating with the player such as briefings and written documents in the Preloader section of the game. Even though the game was released in 2003, the communication devices such as voice lines, NPC dialogue, on-screen tutorial, notification etc. are also present in modern games and they include the same type of speech acts, therefore the release date does not play a significant role in this case.

4.3 Comparison

After the analysis of speech acts within the utterances in Life Is Strange and Call of Duty, it was possible to observe that each game consists of different types of interactions. In life Is Strange, the amount of dialogue is dense, the speech acts tend to be more often indirect and also there is a bigger emphasis on the dialogue between different NPCs and also on interpersonal dialogue. The dialogue between in-game elements and the player is sparse, information to the player is often delivered by the inner speech of the playable character. On the contrary, in Call of Duty the utterances are sparse, most of them are direct as the goal is to communicate information efficiently and straightforwardly. During the gameplay, one can observe more utterances that communicate directly with the player in the form of tutorials, tooltips and notifications. These differences can be mostly attributed to the different genres of these two games.

4.3.1 Comparison of interactions in Life Is Strange and Call of Duty

As Life Is Strange is a story-based adventure game, it is fitting to include more dialogue with frequent indirect speech acts that create interesting conversations and stories. The lesser directness creates more immersion as the player feels more like the main character. Call of Duty is a first person shooter focused on action packed gameplay. Large amounts of dialogue and indirect speech acts are not much needed and in many cases are distracting. Because the goal is to immerse the player in the faster and more active gameplay, the on-screen messages that quickly inform the player are suitable as they do not slow the pace of the game. These differences are, however, only on the types of interactions and their frequency.

4.3.2 Analysis of speech acts within their respective categories of interactions

In this part I will analyse each class of interaction that was possible to observe in both Life Is Strange and Call of Duty. I will list the differences and similarities between the speech acts within these two games and their genres.

P ⇄ IE; notification ⇄ player

- *Life Is Strange:* "Life Is Strange is a story based game that features player choice, the consequences of all your in game actions will impact the past, present and future. Choose wisely…"
- *Call of Duty:* "Outskirts of Ste. Mère Eglise, France, JUNE 5, 1944, 2330 hrs "
  "Objective updated"
  "Game saved"
  "Picked up ammo for the Kar98k"

In this category, most speech acts are all direct representatives as they directly provide information to the player. In Life Is Strange, the sentence "Choose wisely…" is a direct directive; however, this is uncommon. This interaction occurs in almost every game, in Life is Strange it is less common than in Call of Duty as the game is trying to not disturb the immersion and frequent notifications are not that necessary. Most of the notifications are in the form of an icon in a corner.

P ⇄ IE; tutorial ⇄ player

- *In Life Is Strange, this type of utterance is not observed.*
- *Call of Duty:* "Press [Tab] to see your objectives."

This category usually consists of direct utterances as the goal is to convey new information straightforwardly to the player. The type of speech acts are representatives and directives. The tutorial usually uses imperative mood, which in the English language is acceptable in instruction manuals and in the army. This interaction occurs only in Call of Duty, in Life is Strange, tutorial is absent as the game mechanics are more intuitive. More complex mechanics are explained subtly throughout the game in the form of tooltips.

P ⇄ IE; tooltip ⇄ player

- *Life Is Strange:* "Look"
- *Call of Duty:* "Press your Objectives key [Tab] to see what your next objective is."
  "The star on your compass marks your next objective."

This category usually consists of direct representatives as the goal is to convey information directly to the player. Some speech acts can also be considered directives as

they also use an imperative mood and direct the player to do a certain action. The frequency of this interaction is roughly the same throughout both of the games.

IE ⇄ IE; playable character ⇄ playable character

- *Life Is Strange:* Where am I? What's happening?...

  "Wait... There's the lighthouse... I'll be safe if I can make it there…"

  "Please let me make it there…"

  "Holy shit."

  "I do love my analog camera. I should take a quick picture now. "
- *Call of Duty:* "In about three hours, I will be in Normandy."

  "We're all quite eager to be in France."

  "If we pull all this off, the Germans are in for one hell of a surprise."

These utterances are mostly direct as there is no need for an indirectness when the character is communicating with oneself. The speech acts are representative and expressive. This category can also contain commissives, but they are not common. These utterances are mostly meant to indirectly communicate the internal thoughts and feelings of the playable character. In Life is Strange, this interaction is much more prominent than in Call of Duty, because the internal dialogue is a major part of the game.

IE ⇄ IE; NPC → playable character

- *Life Is Strange:* "Alfred Hitchcock famously called film, "little pieces of time" but he could be talking about photography, as he likely was."

  "Now, can you give me an example of a photographer who perfectly captured the human condition in black and white?"

  "I believe Max has taken what you kids call a "selfie""

  "and clearly want to join the conversation"

  "Sorry. I couldn't resist."

  "can you please tell us the name of the process that gave birth to the first self-portraits?"
- *Call of Duty:* "Baker Company, listen up."

"I want all of you to learn the objectives of every unit in both the 101st and 82nd."

"On H-hour D-Day, seaborne infantry will attack five beaches codenamed Utah, Omaha, Gold, Juno, and Sword here on the coast of Normandy."

"Good luck."

"Move out! Secure the perimeter!"

"You guys, over here! By the wall! Defensive positions, get down!"

These utterances are direct and indirect and they can be representatives, expressives, directives and also commissives. They can also be in very specific circumstances declaratives. They are representations of real life conversations. This interaction is more common in Life is Strange as the game is more focused on the story, than Call of Duty. In Call of Duty, the speech acts are more often direct as the imperative mood is used in an army environment.

IE ⇄ IE; NPC ⇄ NPC

- *Life Is Strange:* "Diane Arbus."
- *Call of Duty:* "Aaaa"

  "Ooch"

  "Achtung! Granate!"

  "Amerikanische Infanterie!"

These utterances are direct but also can be indirect as they are representations of real life conversations. In these examples it is possible to observe representatives and expressives, but they can also be directives, commissives and declaratives. This interaction is again more common in Life is Strange.

P ⇄ P

In this analysis, no interaction between two or more players was able to be observed. The main reason for the non-observance in both games was because both games are mostly meant to be played in single player mode. It was also not possible to observe this interaction because in Life is Strange, the game has no multiplayer mode and in Call of Duty, it is nearly impossible to find other players on local servers.

Conclusion

Video games are a medium that utilise the most diverse ways of communication. There are countless genres with many interactive elements and many devices used to share information to the player. In this thesis, first the theory of speech acts was outlined and the two important notions crucial in the analysis of speech acts were introduced; Searle's classification of speech acts and the directness of speech acts. Due to vast advancements of video games in recent decades, the second chapter highlights the most important development in ways of communicating information to the player and also presents the current state of affairs.

In the third chapter, the main goal was to find or create a classification of utterances that would be universally applicable to all genres and styles. The best approach appeared to be centred around the addressor and addressee of the utterances. This approach effectively avoids all other aspects of video games (e.g. input/output information, engagement, difficulty) that were deemed not suitable for classifying speech acts. Using this approach, the different types of interactions between the player and the interactable in-game elements were able to be established. The three main classes are Player ⇄ Player (P ⇄ P) , Player ⇄ in-game element (P ⇄ IE) and in-game element ⇄ in-game element (IE ⇄ IE). Every video game interaction that produces speech acts can then be placed in one of these three classes.

The analysis of speech acts in Life Is Strange and Call of Duty using this classification yielded many useful insights. It mainly confirmed the proposition that different types of interactions contain specific types of speech acts. Most prominent examples can be seen in tooltip ⇄ player and tutorial ⇄ player, where most of the speech acts are direct representatives and directives and NPC ⇄ NPC, where speech acts are very similar to real life conversations. In most cases it is easy to identify a video game interaction, for example a tutorial, therefore this classification can be used to easily derive the directness and type of speech act.

This classification can be further expanded and more specific categories can be created, which would narrow down the possible types of speech acts contained.

List of Figures

List of abbreviations

2D - two-dimensional

3D - three-dimensional

AAA games - games with high development and marketing budgets

IE ⇄ IE - in-game element ⇄ in-game element speech act

MMORPG - massively multiplayer online role-playing games

MOBA - Multiplayer online battle arena

NPC - non-player character

P ⇄ IE - player ⇄ in-game element speech act

P ⇄ P - Player ⇄ Player speech act

RPG - role-playing games

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