Read/Write/Play

Digital Game-based Language Learning with Interactive Fiction

"Will you read me a story?"

"Read you a story? What fun would that be? I've got a better idea: let's tell a story together."

Joe Pereira

APPI Lisbon, 2013
Cognition VS Content
Cognitive Skills

Multi-dimensional visual-spatial skills

Inductive discovery

Attentional deployment

Schemata construction

Imagination building

Problem-solving

Meta-cognitive strategies
The Gamer

34YRS
The average age of a gamer

39YRS
The average age of most frequent game purchaser

12YRS
Average number of years adult gamers have been playing computer/video games

2010 Gamer Ages

- 25% Under 18
- 49% 18-49
- 26% Over 50

67% of US households play video games

The 2010 average gamer spends 8 hours a week playing video games

168 Hours/Week

40% of all gamers are female
What’s in a game?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rules</th>
<th>Goal</th>
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Feedback  
Voluntary

1. Sensation: Game as sense-pleasure
2. Fantasy: Game as make-believe
3. Narrative: Game as unfolding story
4. Challenge: Game as obstacle course
5. Fellowship: Game as social framework
6. Discovery: Game as uncharted territory
7. Expression: Game as soap box
8. Submission: Game as mindless pastime
Digital Game-based Learning

Csikszentmihalyi, 1990
When we think of games, we think of fun. When we think of learning we think of work. Games show us this is wrong. They trigger deep learning that is itself part and parcel of the fun. It is what makes games deep.

Gee, 2007
"Will you read me a story?"

"Read you a story? What fun would that be? I've got a better idea: let's tell a story together."
The phone rings.

Oh, no – how long have you been asleep? Sure, it was a tough night, but– This is bad. This is very bad.

The phone rings.

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9:05 by Adam Cadre
Version 1.01 (10 February 2000) / Serial number 9502
Written in Inform 6.21, library 6/10

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**Bedroom** (on the bed)
This bedroom is extremely spare, with dirty laundry scattered haphazardly all over the floor. Cleaner clothing is to be found in the dresser. A bathroom lies to the south, while a door to the east leads to the living room.

On the endtable are a telephone, a wallet (which is closed) and some keys.

The phone rings.

> **answer phone**
You pick up the phone. "Hadley!" a shrill voice cries. "Hadley, haven't you even left yet?? You knew that our presentation was at nine o' clock sharp! First the thing with the printers, now this – there won't even be enough left of you for Bowman to fire once he's done with you. Now get the hell down here!!"

Click.

> **examine me**
You're covered with mud and dried sweat. It was quite an exhausting night – no wonder you overslept! Even making it to the bed before conking out was a fairly heroic accomplishment.

> |
What characterises Interactive Fiction?

- A computer programme
- A non-linear narrative
- A simulation of a world
- A game

Montfort (2003). Twisty Little Passages
You just started up a game and now you’re staring at text and a blinking cursor and you don’t know what to do!

Don’t panic kids — Crazy Uncle Zarf is here to help you get started...

You are standing in an open field west of a white house, with a boarded front door. There is a small mailbox here.

You can try all sorts of commands on the things you see. Try the commands that make sense! Doors are for opening; buttons are for pushing; pie is for eating. (Mmm, pie.)

If you meet a person, these should work:
- TALK TO name
- ASK name ABOUT something
- TELL name ABOUT something
- GIVE something TO name
- SHOW something TO name

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Each game has slightly different commands, but they all look pretty much like these.

You could also try:
- EAT it
- DRINK it
- FILL it
- SMELL it
- LISTEN TO it
- LISTEN UNDER it
- UNLOCK it WITH something

Or even:
- LISTEN
- SLEEP
- WAKE UP
- UNDO

These commands are very common:
- EXAMINE it
- TAKE it
- DROP it
- OPEN it
- PUT it IN something
- PUT it ON something

When in doubt, examine more.

“Does the game intro suggest ABOUT, INFO, HELP? Try them first!

N/E/S/W/NE/SE/NW/SW: Go in the indicated compass direction.
L: LOOK around to see what is nearby.
X: EXAMINE a thing in more detail.
I: take INVENTORY of what you possess.
Z: WAIT a turn without doing anything.
G: do the same thing AGAIN

A service of the People’s Republic of Interactive Fiction:
http://pr-if.org
Why use IF with learners?

- reading fluency
- provides more interactive/engaging reading material
- authentic language
- in line with CLT /SLA
- incidental vocabulary learning
- learner autonomy
- computer-mediated collaborative learning
- critical/lateral thinking
- problem solving
Learner Perceptions of IF

• It could be an important tool to learn different vocabulary that is used in more practical situations and not typical classroom behaviour.

• We learn English because we have to pay more attention to the words because we want to move on.

• I had the freedom to make my character do what I wanted him to do and I didn't know what to expect - that's what makes IF fun.

• English is being practised when you command your character and sometimes you have to try to find other words to say the same thing you meant for the computer to understand what you are saying.

Where to find Interactive Fiction (and yes, it's free!)

Play online:

• http://iplayif.com and http://parchment.toolness.com

Download and install an interpreter + game files:

• Interactive Fiction Database : www.IFDB.tads.org

Recommended interpreters:

• Gargoyle          Frotz for iOS           Twisty for Android

Lesson plans, recommended downloads and further thoughts on using Interactive Fiction for teaching and learning: www.theswanstation.com
The Bedroom is a room. “The bedroom is a total mess. You can barely make out a bed underneath the piles of discarded clothes. There is a door to the south”.

A room called Bathroom is south of the Bedroom. “The Bathroom is surprisingly clean. The pink walls and flowery toilet seat look somewhat out-of-place. The exit is north”.
Quest 5

www.quest5.net
www.textadventures.co.uk
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(For more information on Infocom games contact: Infocom, Inc., P.O. Box 835, Garden City, NY 11530.)

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> Thank audience
Joe kindly thanks you for listening!

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