

Assignment 2 Reflection

Requirement 1

This story, "Senpai", contains 3 sets of dialogue choices. The first set contains the nodes "Start", "P1", "P2", "P3" and "P4"; the second set contains "silence 1", "P5", "P6", "P7" and "Silence 2"; the third set contains "P8", "P9", "P10", "P11", "Tachibana's Goodbye", "Yes, Goodbye" and "End". Therefore, each set of dialogue choices has more than two levels of choices. The motif of this story is a depiction of the communication between two shy people. The protagonist, controlled by the player, may pretend to be mean, outgoing, or other qualities to mask his personality, but he is still shy. These people naturally have pauses in their conversation when they do not know what else to say. The two pauses, represented by the nodes "Silence 1" and "Silence 2", are naturally placed, which also helps to divide the story into three sections. Also, the selection of the three dialogue choices was also inspired by the concept of "Accretive Player", a term used by Short (2013) whereas the player doesn't know the protagonist's own motivations. In this story, the player does not understand the two characters, not just their motives. As the story progresses, the player will learn more about the two characters so the three sets of dialogues convey the three phases of their communication. They are the beginning, when they ask for basic information, the middle, when they want to learn more about each other, and the end, when they ask about their future plans before saying goodbye.

Requirement 2

Initially, I was planning to completely use sentence selection for my dialogue choices as that was effective for producing a sense of story involvement (Sali, 2010); however, I realized that humans do not naturally talk in one full sentence all the time so I used that concept as a basic structure and added other elements. The interjections, such as "Hmm..." in the node "P8" and "Let me see..." in "P5", reflects on how people actually speak. By including them, the dialogue choices should sound more natural which can affect the overall experience of the gameplay since the dialogue is the central component for narrative based games (Sali, 2010).

Furthermore, the use of short or long sentences can establish the mood. In the first set of dialogue choices, the options are quite simple such as "Hi" in the node "Start" or "Student council was fun this year" in "P1". This is because the main character does not know who Tachibana is so speaking fast in short sentences is natural. By the second and third set of dialogue choices, the two characters are acquainted so they can have a more insightful conversation. This is demonstrated by the fact that the majority of possible selections contain more than one sentences such as "Let me see... day" in node "P5" and "Oh Gosh... economics" in P6 because the answers are in more depth. Also, the interjections make the dialogue sound as if the protagonist is more interested in the conversation.

Requirement 3

The choices available in the second set of dialogue choices is dependent on the first set and the third is dependent on both the second and the first set. In the second set of dialogue choices, the nodes "P8", "P9", and "P10" has a different dialogue choice depending on the true and false condition, "UNLOCK hate music". This can be triggered in the node "P3" by the options "I do not really like piano..." and "Piano is too difficult". In the third set of dialogue choices, the nodes "P11" and "P12" has a different choice based on the condition "UNLOCK hate music" in node "P3", located in the first set of

dialogue. The node “Yes, Goodbye” also has a different dialogue choice based on whether the character is naughty, which depends on the player’s selection of choices. This incorporates a number fact that is deducting points based on bad decisions throughout the first and the second sets of dialogue choices.

Requirement 4

Emotional agency “presents player with questions that carry emotional weight and visibility consequences that paradoxically have little to no effect on the events of the game” (Weir, 2011). In other words, the player will feel that there is an emotional impact on the choices they choose to make; nonetheless, the overall story will stay the same. In this story, the player has a wide variety of choices to choose from for majority of the nodes and each choice demonstrates a personality for the main character such as the choices in nodes “P1” or “P8”. The choices provided can allow the player to choose the desired personality they want Tachibana to have since her response follows the player’s choice and actively reshapes to satisfy the player’s desire without changing the structure of the story; hence, it satisfies emotional agency (Larsen, 2016).

When the player makes a choice, Tachibana will respond differently since she does not have a strong pre-set personality, which prevents the player from feeling that they do not have control over her responses; hence, it supports emotional agency (Sali, 2010). For some instances as mentioned in requirement 3, choices the player makes will affect the choices available in subsequent sets of dialogue choices, but not to the extent that the choices can have a huge impact on the story. Regardless of the actions the player will make, Tachibana will still have a final conversation with her teacher before leaving the player. This is similar to the game “Balloon Diaspora” (Cardboard Computer, n.d.) where the player can make choices that are meaningful, but has no impact on the story such as answering where you are from.

Throughout the story, I have also included sections of “commitment to meaning” (Tanenbaum, 2010) where the player is not given a set of choices, but still has to follow the character’s intent by selecting a that option. An example of this would be in the “Start” node when the player has a choice to talk to Tachibana or remain silent. If the player chooses to remain silent for the third time, they will be forced to initiate a conversation with Tachibana which is similar to the game “The Killer” (Magnuson, n.d.) where the player has to press spacebar to continue the story. “Balloon Diaspora” (Cardboard Computer, n.d.) is another example as the player has to move to locations to speak with the main character. Even though the player can move around, they have to move to a specific location for the story to continue. In a larger sense, “commitment to meaning” (Tanenbaum, 2010) is a branch of emotional agency.

References

Cardboard Computer. (n.d.). *Balloon Diaspora*. [Digital Game]

Larsen B.A., Schoenau-Fog H. (2016) The Narrative Quality of Game Mechanics. In: Nack F., Gordon A. (eds) Interactive Storytelling. ICIDS 2016. Lecture Notes in Computer Science, vol 10045. Springer, Cham

Magnuson, J. (n.d.). *The Killer*. [Digital Game]

Sali, S., Wardrip-Fruin, N., Dow, S., Mateas, M., Kurniawan, S., Reed, A. A., & Liu, R. (2010). Playing with words. *Proceedings of the Fifth International Conference on the Foundations of Digital Games - FDG 10*. doi:10.1145/1822348.1822372

Short, E. (2013, May 15). Column: 'Homer In Silicon': The Accretive Player Character. Retrieved March 20, 2019, from http://www.gamesetwatch.com/2009/06/column_homer_in_silicon_the_ac.php#more

Tanenbaum, K., & Tanenbaum, J. (2010). Agency as commitment to meaning: Communicative competence in games. *Digital Creativity*, 21(1), 11-17. doi:10.1080/14626261003654509

Weir, G. (2011, May 02). Analysis: Incidental Character Choices in Balloon Diaspora. Retrieved March 20, 2019, from http://www.gamasutra.com/view/news/124604/Analysis_Incidental_Character_Choices_in_Balloon_Diaspora.php