

# Approach to Game Analysis: Verb Based Storytelling Evaluation

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In almost every game that features a story an imbalance emerges between the narrative needs and the actions allowed during play. If we consider Micheal Mateas' definition of agency as something experienced "when there is a balance between the material and formal constraints,"<sup>1</sup> we could then argue that the aforementioned imbalance between gameplay and narration is caused by a lack of agency. This analysis wants to establish if the overlap between story actions and in-game actions can be a good measurement unit for storytelling quality.

As Chris Crawford explains<sup>2</sup>, the range of things a game can tell is directly dependent on the number of verbs the player can use. The proposed approach consists of collecting the verbs employed in the narration and the ones implemented in the game. The two lists will be analyzed and each verb weighted according to its frequency and importance (whether it is necessary for the story to proceed or not), then they will be compared. If the story-relevant verbs will figure also in the list of implemented verbs the player will experience agency, hence the storytelling should be good. Vice versa the lack of agency should result in mediocre storytelling. A survey will be then submitted to a group of players to determine whether and how much agency influences the enjoyment of the game narrative story.

This study seeks to answer to the following questions from a player perspective: Is agency relevant to storytelling? Is important to implement the story in the gameplay for an effective narration?

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<sup>1</sup>Mateas, Michael. "A Preliminary Poetics for Interactive Drama and Games". *SIGGRAPH Art and Culture Papers*, 2001.

<sup>2</sup>Chris Crawford, *Chris Crawford on Interactive Storytelling. Second edition* (New Riders, 2013).