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SPEECH ACTS IN THE MASSIVELY MULTIPLAYER GAME TIBIA

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Monograph submitted in partial satisfaction of
the requirements for the degree of Licenciatura
dupla em Língua Inglesa e Língua Portuguesa.

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims at verifying the most common speech acts present in the massively multiplayer role-playing game Tibia. In such game, players from all around the world take the roles of characters and lead a virtual life, which includes social and communicative interactions. The interactions carried out by player characters are analyzed in the light of the speech act theory. That is, this study presents an analysis of the structure and content of the messages players attempt to convey within their dialogues in the game. Finally, as English is the standard language used in Tibia, it is believed that the game can be beneficial for learners of English as a foreign language.

Key words: Speech acts. Online RPGs. Tibia game. Social interaction.

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1 INTRODUCTION

MMGs are games played over the internet, which allow thousands of players to coexist and interact with one another in virtual fantasy realities through the form of fictional characters, called **avatars** (JENNINGS, 2006 ; BARTON, 2008). Those worlds are filled with fearsome and amazing elements to be explored, and tools to perform a variety of exciting actions in order to achieve the characters' goals in the game.

The MMGs' realities expose players, through their characters, to numerous experiences and relationships similar to the ones we are exposed to in our real world. For instance, the players' characters get to socialize with numerous other characters, make their mark in the world by adding new elements to it, such as stores, houses and so on (JENNINGS, 2006; BARTON, 2008).

Moreover, the characters are able to build a reputation and improve themselves, becoming more powerful and consequently able to face bigger challenges in the game world. Finally, characters get to make friends, negotiate and count on the help of other players in order to accomplish their missions or carry out everyday tasks. Thus, the players' characters actively contribute to building the story of an MMG through their actions and interactions with others. They are not merely expectators, they are part of it.

Massively multiplayer role-playing games are a modality of games that has evolved from the traditional modality of role-playing games, and therefore share several elements in their essences (BARTON, 2008; MARQUES & CIONE, 2006). Thus, we can apply Schick's statement about the motivation to learn through RPGs.

Most forms of entertainment involve watching other people do things, engaging little of a person's mind and imaginations. If all your entertainments are passive, you learn passivity. You don't learn nearly as much from watching other people as you do from doing it yourself. Playing a role-playing game engages all your faculties, because exciting things are happening to you through your character, and if there is a problem, it's up to you to solve it. The story goes nowhere unless you drive it along. And when your player character succeeds, it's your victory and not some second-hand achievement of some hero on the TV screen. (SCHICK, 1991, p 13 and 14).

However, just as the choices players make to their characters may succeed, they may awfully go wrong, ruining one's mission, jeopardizing their reputation or even leaving their lives at stake (SCHICK, 1991). Hence, we can see that, as players lead virtual lives, they can get to perform numerous actions through their characters which are similar to the

ones people perform in their real lives and many of those actions involve communication, the use of language. Thus, the player characters need to use language to communicate with others in order to perform many actions in the game. The features of this type of role-playing games drew my attention as a possible benefit to people who wish to learn English as a second language. Therefore, I decided to observe some of the likely interactions players are exposed to.

This discussion leads us to the theory that will be applied to analyze the communication within MMGs, the theory of **speech acts**, whose basic concept is the following: whenever speakers say something, they are not simply uttering sentences, or words, they are performing actions via their utterances. In addition, they do it with a certain intention, which the hearer is expected to recognize for the act to be successful. For instance, when one says “Can you bring me some coffee?” they are not just saying it, but also performing the act of requesting something. The speaker’s intention in this case is to impel the hearer to do a certain thing in virtue of the speaker’s wish. Thus, when speakers perform actions via utterances, they are performing speech acts (YULE, 1996; BACH & HARNISH, 1979).

Language is used to perform numerous actions in real life which involve communication, that is, people communicate through speech acts. MMGs’ players have the chance to carry out numerous actions similarly as people do in real life. Hence, it is possible to assume that they are likely exposed to a number of different speech acts in the game, which are used to perform everyday tasks, accomplish missions and so on. Through those actions, the players become more powerful and able to defend themselves from possible threats from other players in the game.

In addition, players are indeed exposed to a number of different speech acts through playing MMGs, as active participants in the game world, who contribute to its forthcomings. This way, the ability to use the language, if not fluently, at least to successfully convey their messages and therefore have their communicative intentions recognized, becomes essential to the players’ success, social relations and even survival in the game.

Finally, the standard language in most MMGs is English, and, therefore, the language that must be used to perform speech acts in those games. Hence, MMGs are a great means of exposure to the English language and of active communicative language learning.

Considering what has been exposed so far, the objective of this study is to:

- Analyze the most common speech acts Tibia players are exposed to in order to verify (1) the content of the interactions, (2) what utterances compose these acts and (3) the circumstances surrounding the acts.

The choice of the game Tibia out of other MMGs originated from the fact that Tibia is free to play, as opposed to other MMGs which charge a monthly fee, which appeals to an extensive number of Brazilian players. In addition, Tibia focuses more on socializing and building the game's civilizations, unlike other MMGs which focus more on combat, similarly to other computer games.

As for the methodology of this study, I had an informal conversation with three players of Tibia¹, in order to discover, based on their experience, what are some of the most common speech acts in the game, in what situations they are performed and what the typical utterances used to compose those acts are like.

After finding out what some of those acts are, six **screenshots** displaying six dialogues that commonly take place in the game play were collected. Finally, those dialogues have taken place between two of those players and were produced exclusively with the purpose of providing material for the analysis proposed in this paper, based on the usual dialogues the players were used to performing in Tibia.

In addition, as the necessity of carrying out and interpreting speech acts often impel players to learn the language used in most of those speech acts, this paper can also contribute to the studies of the wide field of English learning.

The first part of this paper provides a further account of the concepts and structure of MMGs in general and an account of the modality that inspired those games: the traditional RPGs. In addition, it exposes the structure of the MMG Tibia, such as how the quests and the communication in the game take place, along with a brief description of the game world.

The third part of this work presents a detailed account on the theory of speech acts, including the conditions required for them to be successful. The fourth and last part of this

¹ The conversations will not be shown here because they are not part of the objective of this study.

work contains screenshots of common dialogues carried out by players in Tibia, followed by analyses of them in the light of the theory of speech acts, along with an account on the circumstances and context in which they usually occur.

2 WHAT IS A TRADITIONAL ROLE-PLAYING GAME?

In this chapter I will provide an overall account of massively multiplayer role-playing games, usually known as MMGs, starting with a brief account of the traditional version of role-playing games (RPGs), followed by their evolution to MMGs.

A traditional RPG, also known as table top RPG, is an interactive game, usually played around a table, in which a group of players takes the roles of fictional characters, and, generally using just some pens, paper and dice, try to create a story while following certain rules established for the game (SILVEIRA, 2003).

There are two kinds of participants of RPGs: the player characters (PCs) and the game master. The PCs are the players who take the roles of fictional characters to play the game. The game master, on the other hand, usually does not have a character of his/her own, but is rather in charge of controlling and guiding the play. He/she is assigned several tasks, such as narrating the story, preparing and describing the scenario, instructing the PCs on their actions and controlling the NPCs (non-player characters), which are characters controlled by the game master of the game. The NPCs are part of the population in traditional RPGs and can be the PCs' opponents, bystanders or allies (SCHICK, 1991).

Schick (1991) argues that for a game to be considered an RPG, it must consist of “**quantified interactive storytelling**”. The point of role-playing is to **tell a story** in which the players take the roles of fictional characters such as heroes or even ordinary citizens. The players, when interpreting those roles, must make decisions concerning their characters' actions by interpreting the clues given by the game master.

The players are free to make different moves, create the story and unfold its details as the game goes along. However, as any other game, it is subordinated by a set of system rules, which are, in this case, presented by the game master. Those rules must be followed in order to assure the game good organization and development. In short, players are free to contribute to building the game story as long as they do not break the game rules.

Such a game is **quantified** in the sense that its rules involve character skills and points defined in terms of numbers (quantities). The skills and especially the points achieved by the PCs greatly determine the advancement of the game, such as the characters' abilities to carry out certain missions, defeat their foes and build their positions in the game. Furthermore, such a ludic game needs rules to be taken more seriously. In other words, the game mixes imagination and rules (SCHICK, 1991).

As the players take the roles of characters in order to play a game type that bears the process of story-telling at its core, the players, therefore, actively contribute to creating the game story, along with the adventures PCs may go through. Hence, their decisions and actions may strongly affect the growth of their teams, along with their own growth and reputation.

RPG's are **interactive**, once the players' decisions conduct the story forward. Thus, while in a game play the characters' actions and plot are previously arranged, the actions and details are disclosed as the playing goes along (SCHICK, 1991).

As RPGs are interactive, the adventures in it are unlikely to be carried out exactly as the master has planned. If they do, there has probably been a problem with it. Thus, the master, whose role is that of a facilitator of the game, has to find the balance between allowing others to freely create a variety of possibilities to the story and having the game under control (MARQUES & CIONE, 2007; SCHICK, 1991).

Thus, while a player interprets a character, they can find elements in the game to support their choices. Finally, unlike other games, each character can attempt any action that comes to their minds, as in the real world; their characters may succeed or awfully fail in those attempts (SCHICK, 1991).

An RPG session is called an adventure and each adventure is composed of a succession of challenges called **quests**. A quest is a journey across a symbolic, fantastic landscape in which the protagonists or players collect objects and talk to characters in order to overcome challenges and achieve meaningful goals (HOWARD, 2008, p XI).

In fact, quests provide a sort of guide on what actions the players may take in the game, who they should talk to and what information to extract from other players and the master, since quests involve carrying out several tasks to be fulfilled. This way, all those tasks and challenges, which include PCs interaction, are the keys to constructing the game story(s).

2.1 FROM TRADITIONAL RPGS TO MMGS

In this section I will provide a brief exposition of the evolution of RPGs modalities, from the traditional ones to MMGs (massively multiplayer online RPGs), along with the reasons that led to the starting of this process.

Since playing traditional RPGs requires gathering a group of players together in the same physical place, with the impositions of today's fast-paced lifestyle, playing this RPG modality became hard as players could not often manage to meet. So, as a way of providing people with a version of this fun experience that would suit their new lifestyle, along came the **CRPGs** (computer role-playing games), which carry most of the same elements of traditional RPGs, but are played through a computer, usually by a single player, as many other computer games, and are available at stores (BARTON, 2008).

However, something was missing from CRPGs. In fact, since the player, in general, plays all by him/herself, playing such a game becomes amusing only if the game itself is interesting to the player. That is, there is no other source of fun when playing CRPGs, such as interacting with others, like in the traditional ones. Thus, there was also little room for actual enactment (role-playing) in those games, since the PCs could only interact with non-player characters (NPCs), instead of real players, and also due to the fact that CRPGs place more emphasis on combat rather than on communication and on constructing stories to the game (MARQUES & CIONE, 2007; BARTON, 2008).

Hence, as the next stage of RPGs, the MMGs (massively multiplayer RPGs) have arisen. This new modality of RPGs enables people to experience games that carry most of the same elements of traditional RPGs and CRPGs, yet they can be played over the internet with thousands or even millions of other players at once (BARTON, 2008). In short, it merges the amusement of interfacing with other players and the convenience of playing a game through one's computer.

2.2 MASSIVELY MULTIPLAYER ONLINE RPGS (MMGS).

In this subsection I will expose a more detailed account of this RPG modality (MMGs), which will include some comparisons between them and the other RPG modalities.

"An MMG is simply a computer game that is played over the internet with many other people at once. These games are called massively multiplayer games because they are multiplayer games on a massive scale" (Jennings, 2005, page 12). Indeed, this game modality allows thousands of players to coexist in virtual persistent worlds, which are shared realities, where people from all over the world are able to interact in a consensual reality controlled by their computers (JENNINGS, 2006; BARTON, 2008).

Jennings (2006) points out that MMGs may present several differences among them, and therefore it is not possible to provide a guide on how to play each one of them specifically within one single book. The author's aim is rather to provide a guide on their shared characteristics.

First, MMGs present many features that simulate real life, for instance, players can talk to one another through **avatars**, which is the form a player is represented to others, do business or even create new elements to the game. However, as it is a game, a simulation aimed at providing a fun experience, players can shape those virtual worlds to suit them. The creation of those games paved the way for the achievement of a practice which some years before was only present in science fiction: the concept of millions of people interfacing with each other from all around the world through a computer network connection (MARQUES & CEONI, 2007; JENNINGS, 2005).

"The player is represented within the game world, usually as an avatar or character defined by the player" (JENNINGS, 2006, p 12). There can be a variety of characters' sets in those games, but this choice is performed according to each game's setting or "world" (JENNINGS, 2006). For instance if the game world is set in a science fiction outer space setting, the player's character may be an astronaut or the leader of an alien community. If the game world is set in an urban modern city, the player's character may be an ordinary citizen, a merchant in a suit and tie or even an urban hero.

MMGs allow, among other things, thousands of players to interact in a virtual world, significantly wide exploration of the world, and character customizing and creation of objects that will be part of the virtual world and therefore accessible to other players. Moreover, those games provide great room for interpretation and cooperation, once the player leads a virtual life (BARTON, 2008; JENNINGS, 2006).

Thus, since players largely contribute to build the game world and determine its destiny, great part of the game decisions and actions is in their hands, and, on this account, players usually tend to put more effort into their performances, in order to be successful in

the game, than they would in circumstances where they are not active contributors. This performance also applies to learning how to use and understand the language of the games. In the case of Tibia, the official language used in its game world is English.

“The story of an MMG is usually that of a character's growth" (JENNINGS, 2006, p 12). A beginner player is often a weak character at first, but as he/she goes on playing his/her character may develop and grow significantly, from a newcomer to a mighty force within the game world, able to overcome any challenge that may come up, and consequently be able to perform more challenging activities (JENNINGS, 2006).

“MMGs usually have some conflict or contest at their core. The players seek to fight in a huge war among themselves, or seek to defeat other creatures and seize their treasures” (JENNINGS, 2006, p 12). In addition, MMGs run continuously, whether or not one is playing. If a player has set up a store within the game, other people may be browsing his/her virtual goods while they are engaged in other activities, just as in a real life online store (JENNINGS, 2006).

Following the essence of traditional RPGs, MMGs do not have linear plots with pre-established beginning, sequences and ending. Thus, players are offered freedom to explore the virtual world and take part in the creation of the story, which is supposed to be continued by the players (MARQUES & CIONE, 2007).

Finally, "MMGs never end"(JENNINGS, 2006, p 12). Thus there will never be an online **victory** screen or **game over** message as in other computer or console games (JENNINGS, 2006).

As opposed to other computer or online game modalities, MMGs' players are not only supposed to play in order to achieve a specific clear goal, but are rather free to seek whatever goal they wish to achieve in those games. One may choose to rarely enter a game so as to pay a quick visit and be brought up to speed on the game events or choose to play it to the fullest, aiming at mastering the game world. Whichever the choice is, players will be pretty well accommodated in them (JENNINGS, 2006). Thus, MMGs appeal well to users once they have freedom to work in their own pace. This sort of freedom also applies to learning the game's language, since players are not pressured by others to respond to the in-game dialogues and actions right away or face-to-face.

As to controlling and facilitating the game play, in the case of MMGs, there is obviously not one single master who is in charge of guiding the game play and the adventures, but a masters' team who is responsible for the creation of plots and quests for

the characters (MARQUES & CIONE, 2007). Moreover, in MMGs, the role of the game master is mostly taken by the NPCs (non-player characters), which are the characters controlled by the game, created by the real game developers and designed to interact with the PCs, assigning quests to the PCs and guiding their missions.

As opposed to CRPGs, MMGs might be fun even if the game itself is not, for the players are able to enjoy the interaction with many other players. Therefore, socializing with others may be one of the gamers' interests, instead of only appreciating the game itself. Moreover, as CRPGs are programs purchased at stores, it is not possible to launch extensions and updates to them as quick and often as to MMGs. Those are some of the reasons why MMGs are so appealing to players and have risen to dominance over the other RPG modalities (BARTON, 2008).

2.3 WHAT IS TIBIA?

I will present an overall and also detailed account of Tibia, the game chosen to be analyzed in this study. I will provide a presentation of the game world of Tibia, its game play mechanisms, its aims and the most common actions that take place in it, specially the actions involving the English language, that is, the speech acts.

Tibia² is a typical fantasy MMG, where players may immerse in a virtual reality by assuming the roles characters such as knights, wizards, healers or even hybrid characters endowed with several different skills. In this fantasy reality, one gets to undertake numerous challenges and missions which include bringing down enemies or deadly creatures and exploring a huge realm in the search of treasures, targets to kill and numerous other elements present in such a vast and rich world.

Along with the taking up challenges and exploration of the world, players are able to interact with thousands of other players from different parts of the worlds, make friends with them, team up or even fight them. Tibia, as many other MMGs, is not only about collecting points or reaching higher levels, but about socializing as well.

² The information about Tibia exposed in this subsection was taken from the game's manual, which is found in the Tibia's official website, included in the references.

As a typical MMG, Tibia is a never-ending game, which allows players to continuously improve their characters, contribute to the story of the game and building well-developed civilizations within the game. Even when a player achieves a top level, there is always more to come in the game: more elements to explore, more friends to make or more to improve about the power and reputation of his/her character.

2.3.1 The Population of Tibia

The population of Tibia's is composed of humans and creatures and is divided in three distinct groups: **characters**, **NPCs** (non-player characters) and **creatures**.

Players are represented in the game world of Tibia, as well as in other MMGs, by avatars which are called **characters**. As the avatars are the graphical representations of the players, which compose their characters, they are indispensable to play the game. In addition, one of most fun and exciting goals to achieve in the game is the development and enhancement of one's character.

Moreover, characters can differ in terms of **general aspects** such as **names**, **gender**, or **game world** they inhabit, and those characteristics are chosen at the moment of the character's creation and cannot be altered later on.

As to the game worlds, those are devised as a means of not crowding players together in Tibia's world, as there is a huge number of players. So, the population of Tibia is spread out in various parallel worlds, which may differ in age of existence, population and location – Tibia runs on servers that are based in different countries -, notwithstanding players are free to join any server they want to. This mergence of players from different countries provide them with the chance of socializing with people from all around the world, and also requires the use of clear English so as to guarantee effective communication in the game.

The population of **creatures** in Tibia consists of a wide range of abhorrent life species, which vary from rebellious humans such as black knights to dreadful undead creatures such as vampires and evil demons that may lurk to surprisingly attack characters. Moreover, among such creatures there are wildlife animals such as bears and wolves and fierce monsters such as dragons and huge spiders. Those creatures may be both threats and drawbacks to the characters advancement and targets that characters must kill in order to

gain experience points and consequently level up. The amount of points made by killing creatures is strongly related to the strength of each creature and the threat it represents to the characters.

The **NPCs** do not represent any real player in the game world, they are characters controlled by the game. They are permanent inhabitants of Tibia's world, as opposed to player characters, who may come and go every now and then. Their appearance is usually like the real characters, which may cause brand new players to confuse them with characters controlled by real players. In addition, NPCs can be found anywhere, unlike real players, and cannot be killed. NPCs can be helpful in many ways: they may trade with the PCs, send them on quests or supply them with worthy information. Last, the conversations with NPCs take place in the NPC channel.

Characters refer to all player avatars, including the players' own avatars. It is possible for one to join, trade, talk and even fight with other characters. Since there is always a real person behind each character, it is essential to follow the game rules when coping with others at any time, so as not to be unfair or disrespectful to others and, by that, possibly jeopardize one's reputation.

2.3.2 Player Communication

Social interaction takes an essential role in Tibia, and communication between players is very important for the conduction and development of the game. However, players must try to maintain certain language standards in order to avoid inappropriate, insulting or misleading communication between players. In addition, it is essential to note that the in-game language in Tibia is English, so unless players post on the RL-chat or in a private channel, they must use English at all times. Therefore, in several circumstances of the game and depending on who one will talk to, speaking and understanding clear English becomes fundamental to playing Tibia.

As a way of performing an effective management of communication in the game, Tibia has been organized in **channels**. Those channels vary in the different communication purposes they are used for, content, and whether they are open to the public of the game or not.

The **default channel** is where communication takes place within the game itself. The dialogues in this channel are displayed on the game window right above the characters' heads. Thus, any player that is near one's character, that is, who is visible in the game window can read what one is saying.

In the **NPC channel** a player is able to talk to NPCs that are standing right next to him/her. To start a dialogue with an NPC is pretty simple: all one has to do is greet the NPC and this channel will automatically open. One usually talks to NPCs to ask for jobs, quests, inventory or clothes. The dialogues to NPCs are usually carried out highlighting key words. If one wants a new outfit or a new mission one has to type the name of the outfit or the words **new mission**.

The **game-chat** channel that is open to all players and all the topics discussed in this channel must be some way related to Tibia. In the **real life-chat channel**, on the other hand, players are free to bring up any topic to the conversations, even about events and topics of their real life, that is, out of the game.

The **trade channel** is public and is reserved for in-game trading. In this channel, players may advertise the items they intend to sell and the special bids for their items. The buying and selling process can also be performed in this channel. In addition, if one is looking for a team to help carry out a quest or for new members to his/her group here is where he/she may announce it.

Through the **help channel** it is possible to turn to tutors to ask questions about the general game play, one's account, the game controls or several other questions that may come up. However, it is not the tutors' duty to answer in-depth questions about game content such as quests.

2.3.3 Trading

Trading is one of the most common and essential actions taken in Tibia, since players are often in need of better combat inventory, or even clothes and food in order to succeed in their quests and to their overall survival in the game world.

Players may trade items with other players and also with NPCs. Trading with NPCs is simple: if a player intends to sell any items he/she has gained as a reward for his/her combats, all he/she has to do is ask to NPCs for a **trade**. Although players can buy

equipments in shops or trade with NPCs, the best equipments are usually offered by players. As there are numerous players selling products it is good to be attentive regarding attractive offers. Last, if players do find good offers within the game itself they can check out the **trade channels**, which displays trading information from numerous players who intend to sell their products.

Finally, as we could see so far, the players of Tibia, as well as many other MMGs, lead a virtual life in a simulated world created by the game. Their activities as in-game characters and as players themselves, similarly to ours in the real world, often require the use of language, that is, the building of dialogues between players. Some of those activities include, for instance, trading, asking for information, defending themselves, or simply chatting. In addition, communication takes place via different channels, which are usually characterized by proximity between speakers, issues to be dealt with and speakers themselves, similarly to communication in our real world.

This way, as communication plays such a crucial role in Tibia, in order to clearly comprehend the criteria used for/in the analyses of the dialogues, it is important to have a clear understanding of the theory that provides such criteria: the speech acts theory. In the next chapter, I will provide a detailed exposure of this theory, which accounts for the basic units of communication.

3 WHAT ARE SPEECH ACTS?

In this chapter, I will provide an account of the concept, of the structures and of the classification of speech acts. The theory of speech acts will be used to carry out the analysis of the communication within the MMG Tibia.

Whenever we utter sentences or words, we are not simply mouthing them, but performing actions by way of them, and those actions are called speech acts. A speech act is meant to accomplish a determined communicative function intended by the speaker and is therefore not only related to the meaning of an utterance itself, but rather to its function and to the effects it is aimed to cause on the listener or reader (SEARLE, 1969 ; BACH & HARNISH, 1979).

For instance, when someone utters a sentence, such as "I am sure you will pay for what you did", they are not simply articulating words, they are performing actions by way of their utterances. In short, actions performed by way of utterances are called speech acts. In the case of the utterance displayed above, one may, depending on the context and circumstances, be making a threat, warning or even replying to someone's question about the consequences of their acts. In addition to those acts, there are many others that can be performed in communication, such as promising, greeting, apologizing, requesting, prohibiting, etc.

Since those acts are designed to convey the speaker's intention and not a specific content itself, the statements used to perform the speech acts are intended to produce an effect upon the listener or reader. In other words, when speakers communicate something to the hearers, they do it with a certain intention in order to produce a determined effect on the hearer. This way, the speakers generally expect their utterances to be recognized by the hearers (SEARLE, 1969; BACH & HARNISH, 1979).

The hearer is expected to acknowledge the speakers' intention underlying their utterances and this process, therefore, requires certain knowledge from the interlocutors about the appropriate uses of the language in each environment, culture or circumstance in order to produce suitable utterances. For instance, idiomatic expressions are usually proper of each language and are used to convey a feeling, opinion, besides being used to carry many other functions. Therefore, as the meaning intended by the speaker is not in the internal meaning of the expression, but rather in the communicative function it performs,

both speaker and listener need to have the understanding of what is intended and not of the literal meaning of the idiomatic expressions.

Thus, it may, at times, be difficult for a person who does not master the appropriate uses of a given language, such as a foreigner who is learning the language, to conduct a successful dialogue, for the learner might simply translate an utterance from his/her mother tongue to this new one and not convey the intended meaning, which would entail a failure in communication.

According to Searle, "all linguistic communication involves speech acts" (SEARLE, 1969, p 16). Differently from what has been in general supposed, words, symbols or sentences are not the unit of linguistic communication, rather, those are produced in the performance of speech acts; they are components of those acts. Speech acts are the production of sentences under certain circumstances and are the "basic units of linguistic communication" (SEARLE, 1969, p 16)

Moreover, those utterances are generally carried out under certain circumstances and in certain contexts, which may consequently have influence upon how they are meant to be taken by the addressees (BACH & HARNISH, 1979).

3.1 COMPONENTS OF SPEECH ACTS

In this section I will supply a brief exposition on how the structure of speech acts is composed.

Whenever one is saying something with a communicative purpose, that is, not just reciting lines or practicing a given language mechanically, he/she intends to perform four acts that compose the given speech act. Those acts are: the **utterance act**, the **locutionary (propositional) act**, the **illocutionary act** and the **perlocutionary act** (BACH & HARNISH, 1979). Considering the utterance below:

1. "I am sure you will pay for what you did".

First, the speaker utters the enunciation above to a hearer in a given language, which in this case is English, in a given context. This is called an **utterance act**. Additionally, the speaker is not just articulating an utterance, he/she is saying something

through this utterance, he/she is actually meaning something by it. This is known as the **locutionary** or **propositional** act - a proposition is composed by a given reference followed by a predication about it.

The speaker may have the intention to produce a certain effect upon the hearer via the locutionary act. Such an act with an underlying intention is called an **illocutionary act**. Last, the results of the illocutionary act, that is, the effects produced upon the hearer are known as the **perlocutionary acts** (BACH & HARNISH, 1979). In short, according to Bach and Harnish (1979), the concepts of the components of speech acts are the following:

Utterance act: the speaker utters something to the hearer in a given language in a given context.

Locutionary act: the speaker says something to the hearer (he/she means something via his utterance)

Illocutionary acts: the speaker does something (an action via his/her utterance intended by him/her).

Perlocutionary acts: the speaker causes an effect upon the hearer via his/her utterance

In the following subsections, I will describe utterance, locutionary and perlocutionary acts in more details.

3.1.1 Locutionary acts

A locutionary act, also known as a propositional act, in general consists of a given reference followed by a predication about it. For example, in the proposition "John has been attempting not to smoke anymore", the reference is "John", a proper noun, and "has been attempting not to smoke anymore" is the predication about "John". However a speaker could express this same proposition via a different utterance, such as "John has been trying to quit smoking" (SEARLE, 1969).

Thus, it leads us to the conclusion that "whenever two illocutionary acts contain the same reference and predication, provided that the meaning of the referring expression is the same, I shall say the same proposition is expressed" (SEARLE, 1969, p 29). Because of this, we can say that a locutionary act is not the same as an utterance act, i.e. , a proposition

involves meaning and communicative purpose and an utterance does not imply meaning or a communicative purpose, since one can utter a sentence with no communicate purpose and also whose meaning cannot be determined only based on its content.

3.1.2 Illocutionary acts

The acts performed by the speaker via their utterances, which has an underlying intention from the speaker to produce a certain effect on the hearer, are called illocutionary acts. In the case of a request, for instance, the speaker intends that the hearer takes his utterance as reason to believe the speaker wants him/her to do a certain thing, which is expressed in the propositional content, because of the speaker's desire. As to an offer, the speaker intends that the hearer takes his/her utterance as a reason to believe that the speaker is proposing to commit to a certain thing that is beneficial to the hearer (BACH & HARNISH, 1979).

Bach and Harnish (1979) claim that for illocutionary acts to be carried out successfully, there is the **communicative presumption** (CP), which states that the hearer assumes the speaker has some identifiable communicative intent, not because there is something special about his/her locutionary act, but because of the communicative presumption (BACH & HARNISH, 1979). Thus, as long as the opposite is not made evident, the hearer assumes that the speaker's locutionary act has some identifiable communicative intent which the hearer has to figure out, to infer.

Hence, if the speaker is aware that he/she is not practicing any illocutionary (communicative) act via his utterance, that his utterance does not have an operative meaning, such as mechanically training one's English, and which is not obvious to the hearer, he has to make it explicit to the hearer, so as not to create a misunderstanding or confusion (BACH & HARNISH, 1979).

An illocutionary act can be **literal** or **nonliteral**. First, it is important to point out that an illocutionary act force is how the speaker intends his proposition to be taken by the hearer. Since there is a straightforward relation between the locutionary act (what is said) and the illocutionary act (what action is done), for the act to be literal, what the speaker does has to be largely determined by what he/she says (BACH & HARNISH, 1979). For instance, in the sentence below:

1. I promise I'll put you in jail for what you did.
2. I promise I'll make you happy forever, baby.

The act of promising implies an act from the speaker that will in general benefit the hearer, and unlikely do the opposite; however, in the sentence (1) the speaker used the verb promise followed by a negative action towards the hearer. So, the locutionary act is intended to be taken as a threat, not a promise, and is therefore not literal since there is not a large relation between the proposition and how it is to be taken - the illocutionary force. On the other hand, the sentence (2) is literal, as the illocutionary force is largely determined by the propositional act (BACH & HARNISH, 1979).

Nonetheless, a literal propositional act cannot be confused with an illocutionary act, for the propositional act, such as "I promise I'll make you happy" is just what is promised in the act of promising, not in the illocutionary act itself. Propositional acts cannot happen by themselves, they can only occur inside an illocutionary act, that is, during actual communication. In addition, other than understanding the meaning of a given propositional act, the hearer needs to assume the speaker has some communicative intention through this proposition (CP), which he has to figure out (BACH & HARNISH, 1979).

The success of illocutionary acts rely on the hearer's recognition of the speaker's intention and understanding of the meaning of his/her proposition. However, the speaker's perlocutionary intent- which produces effects upon the hearer's feelings, beliefs or actions- do not need to be fulfilled for an illocutionary act to be fulfilled, because, again, its fulfillment consists in the producing upon the hearer the effect of recognition of the speaker's intention and understanding of his proposition (BACH & HARNISH, 1979).

3.1.3 Perlocutionary acts

Whenever a speaker produces an utterance, he/she has an underlying illocutionary intention. However, the speaker cannot guarantee or predict what effect he/she might cause upon the hearer via his/her utterance. In fact, the speaker's utterance may even cause an effect he/she did not intend to, or at least not to a certain extent. Such effects that have

influence upon the hearer's beliefs, actions or thoughts, as the one intended to be produced by the speaker, are called perlocutionary effects (BACH & HARNISH, 1979).

As the speaker cannot guarantee or predict the perlocutionary effects of his utterances, the only way he can assure the success of communication is relying on the fulfillment of the illocutionary acts, that is, on the speaker's understanding his/her utterance and recognizing his/her intention underlying it. In virtue of this, the classification of speech acts relies on the kinds of illocutionary acts (BACH & HARNISH, 1979).

3.2 INTERPRETATION OF SPEECH ACTS.

In this section, I will present and provide a brief explanation on the devices that hearers' can rely on in order to interpret the speech acts produced by the speakers.

Speech acts take place within certain circumstances, usually known as **speech events**, which vary in their nature, and those constitute factors that determine the interpretation of statements that carry out speech acts. Thus, a single statement may perform distinct speech acts depending on the speech circumstances and context it is used (YULE, 1996).

A speaker provides, by what he/she says, a basis for the hearer to infer what the speaker intends to do via his/her utterance. However, what he/she says partly determines what he/she can reasonably be expected to be taken to intend (BACH & HARNISH, 1979). As the speaker's utterance is only a basis for the hearer's inference about his/her reasonable communicative intention, it is obviously not enough for the hearer to successfully infer what he/she intends to be doing. Along with the basis contained in the utterances, the hearer is helped in his/her inferential process by the circumstances surrounding the given utterances. Those circumstances involve the context in question and what the hearer and speaker believe about each other. Those are known as **mutual contextual beliefs** (MCBs) (BACH & HARNISH, 1979).

“We call these items of information "**beliefs**" rather than knowledge because they need not to be true in order to figure in the speaker's intention and the hearer's inference, **contextual** because they are relevant to and activated by the context “(BACH & HARNISH, 1979, p. 5). Last, “they are **mutual** for not only do the speaker and hearer have

those beliefs but also do they believe they both have them and believe the other to believe they both have them” (BACH & HARNISH, 1979, p 5).

In order to infer the **meaning of a propositional** act, the speaker relies primarily on what is uttered and also on MCBs, since, in some cases, the speaker's utterance may have more than one meaning and usually only one of them is meant to be operative by the speaker. So, relying on the MCBs, the speaker generally tends to choose the meaning that is more appropriate to the circumstances, that is, to the speech events. However in some cases the speaker may intend to express both meanings of an ambiguous word or sentence in a given language as operative, such as in making a pun, which the hearer can infer by relying on the MCBs (BACH & HARNISH, 1979) "An utterance may produce different interpretations depending on the relation between the interlocutor and what the both assume each other to believe or be aware of " (BACH & HARNISH, 1979, p 5).

The hearers also tend to rely on the mutual contextual beliefs in order to identify the corresponding **referent** to a **referring expression**. For instance, if a speaker uses the proper name "Julia" (Julia has been struggling to tell her best friend that she loves him), the hearer, relying on the MCBs, tends to assume that the speaker is referring to a person named Julia that they both know, otherwise, the speaker would have specified which Julia he is referring to (BACH & HARNISH, 1979).

As for **identifying the force** of an illocutionary act, the hearer relies primarily on the locutionary act. If the act is literal, then the illocutionary force is strongly determined by what is said (locutionary act), if it is not literal, the hearer has to rely on the MCBs in order to consider which force is more appropriate or at least eliminate the ones that seem inappropriate according to the MCBs. Indeed, the speaker's intonation may be one of the factors that compose the MCBs and can influence the identification of the type of illocutionary act (BACH & HARNISH, 1979).

3.3 FELICITY CONDITIONS

In this section, I will supply an account on the conditions required for speech acts to be successful.

For the performance of a speech act to be successful, that is, for the act to be recognized as intended, there are certain expected or appropriate circumstances, which are

known as **felicity conditions**. In some overt cases in particular, the speaker needs to be in a certain position to perform a given speech act for it to be **felicitous**. For instance, only a judge or a priest would be in a position to say "I now pronounce you husband and wife" (YULE, 1996).

Regarding ordinary people in everyday contexts, there are preconditions for speech acts as well, which are, according to Yule (1996) and Searle (1969): **general conditions, content conditions, preparatory conditions, sincerity conditions and essential conditions**.

General conditions may even appear quite obvious but they need to be in display as they are some of the conditions for speech acts to be felicitous. Firstly, both interlocutors cannot have any physical impairment that would block or hinder communication. In addition, the speaker and the hearer need to share the same language. Last, both interlocutors need to be performing actual illocutionary acts, and not just reciting lines, role-playing or practicing the language mechanically (YULE, 1996; SEARLE, 1969)

Content conditions cover the appropriateness of the propositional content regarding each speech act. Indeed, such an isolated look into the propositional content shows the peculiarities of each kind of illocutionary acts. For instance, the act of promising requires that the content of this act must be about some event in the future, since the act of promising entails the speaker's commitment to a future act (SEARLE, 1969).

According to Yule (1996), **preparatory conditions** are generally particular of each illocutionary act and thus often differ from one another. First of all, it is important to have in mind that speech acts are carried out for a purpose, that is, in order to fulfill a certain intention from the speaker, and that each is used in order to produce different results upon the hearer (SEARLE, 1969; YULE, 1996).

For instance, a promise implies an action done by the speaker that will likely benefit the hearer. Thus, one of the preparatory conditions is that the hearer prefers the speaker's doing it to his not doing it. If the action entailed by the speech act were to not benefit the speaker, but the opposite, it would not constitute a *promise* but rather a *threat* (the act of promising would be infelicitous). Moreover, as speech acts are performed for a purpose, one of the conditions would be that the action would not happen by itself or that the speaker would not perform it in the absence of the promise, that is, in the normal course of events.

Yule (1996) and Searle (1969) point out that the existence of **sincerity conditions**, that is, speaker's sincerity about the attitude expressed is essential for the speech acts to be performed felicitously. For instance, one of the sincerity conditions for the act of promising is that the speaker intends to do what he promised.

Finally, the **essential conditions** cover the entailments of a speech act. In the act of promising, for instance, the performance of this act creates in the speaker the obligation to do a certain act, "it counts as the undertaking of an obligation" (SEARLE, 1969, p 37). In the case of forbidding, the speaker changes his state of allowing a certain thing to his not allowing it, and the hearer changes his state of being free to do a certain thing to his not being free to do it (SEARLE, 1969).

3.4 TYPES OF SPEECH ACTS

In this final section, I will provide a brief account on the main types of speech acts.

According to Bach and Harnish (1979), we can distinguish types of illocutionary acts by the types of illocutionary intents. Since the fulfillment of illocutionary acts take place by the hearer's recognition of the attitudes expressed by the speaker, the classification of illocutionary acts is built regarding the types of expressed attitudes. Such as the attitude of committing to doing a certain thing that is beneficial to the hearer, as in the act of promising, or the attitude of believing a certain thing is true and that the speaker intends the hearer acquire that belief too, as in the act of asserting.

Corresponding to types of attitudes expressed the great variety of illocutionary acts are divided into four categories. **Acknowledgement, commissive, constative, and directive acts.**

Acknowledgements

By performing acknowledgement acts, the speaker expresses certain feelings towards the hearer. "Commonly, such occasion is mutually recognized by the hearer and speaker" (BACH & HARNISH, 1979, p 51). Thus, those expressed feelings are not only appropriate but also expected by the hearer that the speaker will produce the relevant acknowledgement to each given occasion.

As those acts are expected in certain occasions, "they are not so much issued to express a genuine feeling as to satisfy a social expectation" (BACH & HARNISH, 1979, p 51). Although such acts often do not express real feelings, they are generally considered acts of courtesy. Therefore, it would be considered rude to question the sincerity of the speaker's feelings when performing those acts (BACH & HARNISH, 1979).

Such acts can be saying "hello" when seeing a known person, thanking someone when receiving a gift or apologizing for having stepped on one's partner when dancing. The only intention to be recognized by the hearer in acknowledgement acts is that the hearer believes that the speaker has the expressed feeling (BACH & HARNISH, 1979).

Commissives

By committing him/herself to do a certain thing, the speaker expressing the intention that the hearer believes his/her utterance entails his/her obligation to do what is expressed in its propositional content, "at least under the conditions specified or mutually believed to be relevant" (BACH & HARNISH, 1979, p 50) One of those conditions may be the hearer's acceptance of the hearer's proposal or commitment to do a certain thing. Those would be, respectively, the cases of an offer and of a promise, since promises are acts of obligating oneself to do a certain thing and offers are proposals to oblige one to do a certain thing (BACH & HARNISH, 1979).

In addition to expressing such intention and belief, the speaker expresses the intention that H takes him/her to have this intention and belief. The corresponding perlocutionary act is that H believe S has this intention and belief and that H himself believes that S is obliged to do A, at least if the required conditions are met (BACH & HARNISH, 1979, p 50).

Constatives

Constative acts are constituted by "the expression of a belief and the intention that the hearer forms or continue to hold that belief" (BACH & HARNISH, 1979, p 46). The perlocutionary fulfillment of that intention, which is the hearer forming a certain belief, may possibly occur through the hearer believing the speaker believes the proposition of the

act in question, and because of this, believing this proposition him/herself (BACH & HARNISH, 1979).

In cases where it is clear to the speaker that the hearer does not believe the given proposition is true and will not change his/her mind just because the speaker believes in it, the hearer will not express the intention that the hearer believes the proposition, but rather express the wish that he does (BACH & HARNISH, 1979).

Some illocutionary acts that fall in the category of constative acts are: stating, avowing, informing, suggesting, etc. What distinguishes those acts is the strength of belief in the proposition of the act. For instance, when one avows something, one's expressed belief is much stronger than when he/she alleges something. As to suppositions and suggestions, the belief in the propositional content is not even weak, rather, the speaker believes there is a reason to believe in the certain proposition or that it would be worth considering the consequences of it (BACH & HARNISH, 1979).

Directives

"Directives express the speaker's attitude toward some prospective action by the hearer" (BACH & HARNISH, 1979, p 47). By performing such acts one also expresses his/her intention that his/her attitude expressed by his/her utterance be taken by the hearer to act in a certain way. When a speaker makes a request, he/she expresses the intention that the hearer will do a certain thing because of his/her wish. A requirement, on the other hand, expresses the speaker's intention that the hearer will do a certain thing simply on account of his/her utterance; this case presumes a certain level of authority over the hearer for his/her utterance to have such weight upon the hearer (BACH & HARNISH, 1979).

As to advisory acts, the speaker expresses the belief that doing a given thing is a good idea or will benefit the hearer. Just as requirements, giving permissions also presume some authority of the speaker upon the hearer, since his/her utterance constitutes enough reason for the hearer to feel free to do a certain action (BACH & HARNISH, 1979).

4 ANALYSES OF THE SPEECH ACTS IN TIBIA

In this chapter, analyses of six screenshots extracted from the game Tibia will be exposed. They contain six common dialogues portraying frequent communicative situations that occur between players. The analyses will be performed in the light of the theory of speech acts.

The dialogues in question generally contain one main speech act, which brings together the other secondary speech acts. Some of the secondary speech acts appear in several dialogues, since they are commonplace in almost all dialogues, such as greeting acts. The main speech acts are analyzed further, focusing especially on their felicity conditions, whereas the others are rather pointed out and exemplified via elements of the dialogues.

Finally, the dialogues take place in various different situations, under distinct contexts, which influence the content of the propositional acts displayed in them. For instance, some dialogues are performed via the default channel, while others take place via the private channel, which may influence what information players need to express when performing illocutionary acts. The circumstances surrounding each dialogue are described before the analyses of the speech acts.

As to the player characters that participate in the dialogues, named **Temurra** and **Rena** in the game, although they carry the same two names in all the dialogues, they are not the same characters in the game and thus there is no relation among the characters from one dialogue to another. In fact, using the same names for the characters was simply a way of saving time by not going through the process of creating other characters to join Tibia. In addition, the information about the characters that is important to understanding the context of each situation is exposed within every situation where the dialogues take place.

In one of the exposed dialogues there is the participation of **Santiago**, who is an NPC (non-player character). It is important to recall that NPCs are characters that are part of the game program and that one of their frequent roles are to assign quests to the players and guide them on carrying out those quests.

1st Dragon down the hole

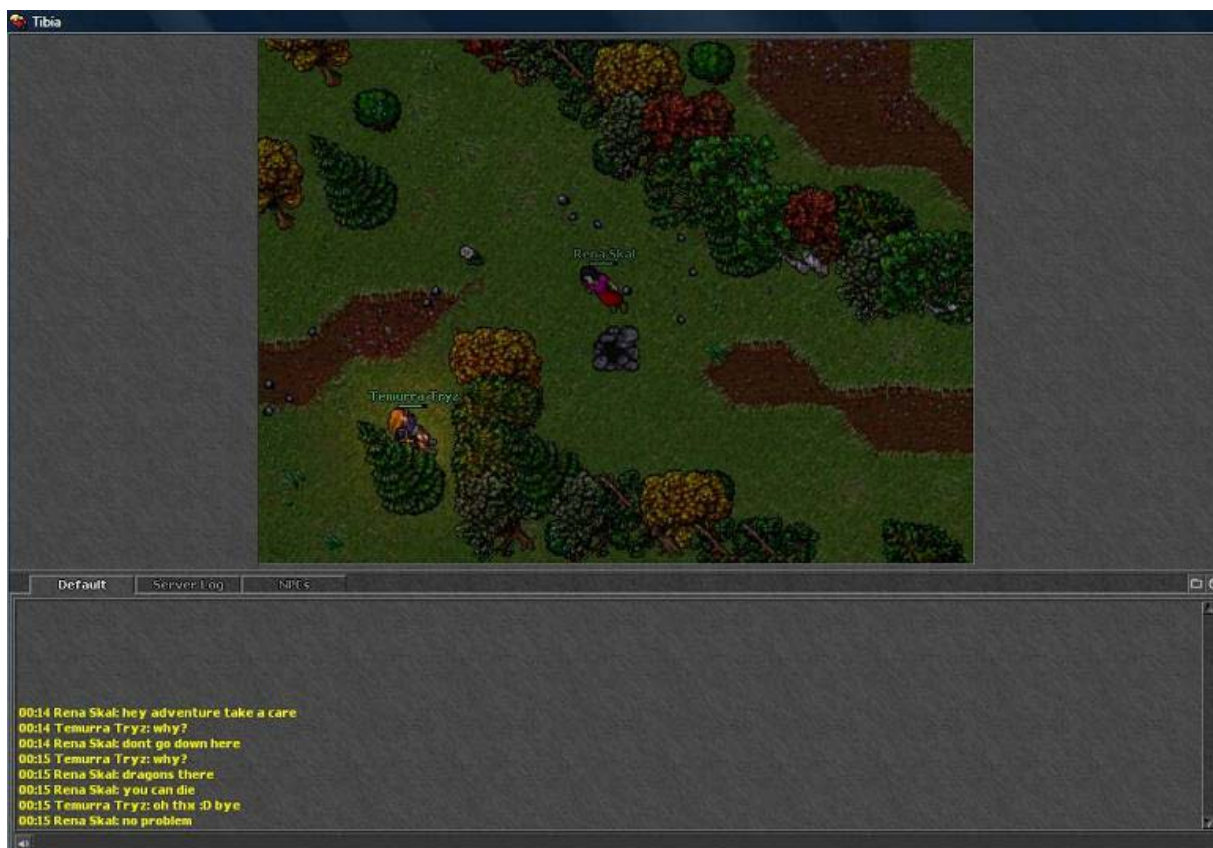


Figure 1: Dragon down the hole
Source: Tibia game³

Situation/context:

The character Rena Skal is just wondering around the area displayed in the game window, when she sees the character Temurra approach a hole on the ground, which is the entrance to a dungeon. This situation/context composes the speech event in which the players' following interaction takes place:

Rena: hey adventure take care

Temurra: why?

Rena: dont go down there

Temurra: why?

³ To play the game, one has to create an account and download the game program from its official website.

Rena: dragons there

Rena: you can die

Temurra: oh thx :D bye

Rena: no problem

.Rena is aware it is likely that there are dragons inside the dungeon and is also aware that Temurra is a low level character and would therefore likely be killed by the dragons. This consists on a **felicity condition for warning**. That is, it is not clear that the hearer, in this case, Temurra, knows there are dragons there. The speaker, i.e., Rena, does not think going down the hole will be beneficial for Temurra , thus, by saying “adventure, take care/ don’t go down there”, Rena is changing Temurra’s state from not knowing to knowing about the danger, characterizing the act of **warning**.

Within the main act of warning, we have the following acts: the act of **greeting**, when both characters come across each other and when they say goodbye. The act of **thanking**, when Temurra expresses her feeling of gratitude towards Rena’s attitude of warning her about a danger. Also, the act of **asking a question**, performed by Temurra’s asking Rena why she should not go down that hole. Finally, the act of **answering a question**, carried out by Rena’s answering Temurra’s previous question.

Through the first proposition in the dialogue, which composes the illocutionary act of warning, Rena uses the word “adventure”, which probably stands for “in your adventure/mission”. Although the expression used is not grammatically complete, Temurra is able to infer what Rena means by relying on the speech events and on the MCBs, that is, the fact that she is in an adventure and that Rena is aware of that situation.

Moreover, despite Rena’s proposition “dragons there” lack of the structure “there are” at its beginning, Temurra is able to infer, via the circumstances and the MCBs, that Rena is probably warning her about the existence of dragons under that hole. In addition, Rena is allowed to use the deictic expression “there” to refer to the hole, because both speaker and hearer hold the same view of a specific location, which features the channel they are speaking through: the default channel. Thus, we can see that the channels influence the form of communication between players.

At last, Rena succeeds at producing her main intended perlocutionary effect upon Temurra, that is, changing Rena’s state from not knowing about the danger in question to

knowing it. We can see that as Rena says “ok, thx”, displaying understanding of the reason of the danger and of the danger itself.

By way of the analysis of this interaction, it is possible to realize that communication plays a role in the game Tibia, since players’ survival may often depend on it at some point. As a matter of fact, if Temurra were not able to have an effective and clear interaction with Rena, she would probably have been killed by dragons as getting into the hole, since Rena’s warning would be misunderstood or even ignored.

2nd A serpent sword

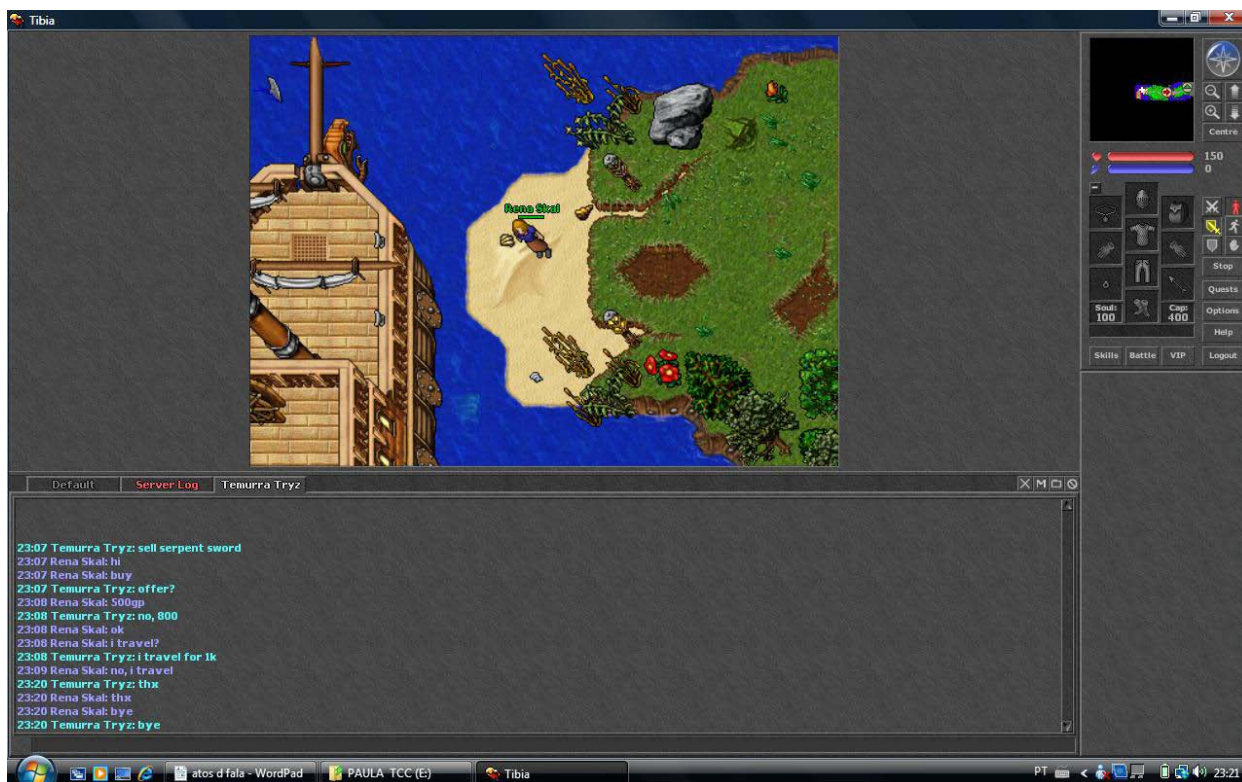


Figure 2: A serpent sword
Source: Tibia game

Situation/context:

The character Temurra is selling a sword to the character Rena and they both then try to negotiate the price and the shipment of the item. They have the following interaction:

Temurra: sell serpent sword

Rena: hi

Rena: buy

Temurra: offer?

Rena: 500gp

Temurra: no, 800

Rena: ok

Rena: I travel?

Temurra: I travel for 1k

Rena: no, I travel

Temurra: thx

Rena: thx

Rena: bye

Temurra: bye

When Temurra announces a sword for sale and asks for a bid, Rena becomes aware that Temurra will prefer her taking the action of bidding a certain value to her doing the opposite, and that the action would likely be beneficial to Temurra, the hearer. In addition, both interlocutors know this action would not happen in the absence of that utterance. These circumstances consist the **felicity conditions for buying/selling**.

So, by saying “500gp”, Rena places bids for the product, hence proposing to oblige herself to doing a certain thing, in this case, giving 500gp in exchange for the sword, designating the act of **buying**. Later, Temurra also performs an act of offering herself to ship the item to Rena by a certain price, by saying “I travel for 1k”.

Within the main acts of **buying/selling**, there are the following acts: The act of **greeting**, at the moment Temurra starts a private conversation with Rena; The act of **announcing** the sale of a sword, by Temurra; Also, the act of **negotiating** the price of the sword when both Rena and Temurra propose a certain offer for the item; Later, the acts of **dissenting** Rena's bid and of Rena's **assenting** the new price established by Temurra; Finally, the act of **thanking**, performed by both characters after settling the deal.

In the first proposition of the dialogue, Temurra is announcing/offering a sword for sale. As we can notice, the sentence is missing the subject. However, as it is an offer of a product in the game world, it becomes clear to the hearer (Rena) that it is Temurra who is selling the sword. In addition, as in a real life context, whenever a product is being announced, the seller is not mentioned as a subject, since it is usually obvious.

Secondly, Temurra's proposition “offer?” is incomplete, composed only by a keyword. Nonetheless, as it is a question and in virtue of the preparatory conditions - Temurra announcing a sword for sale - , Rena is able to infer that this speech act is question about the offer she, as the buyer, is supposed to make for the product.

As to the propositions “I travel...” both interlocutors use the word “travel” in the sense of moving from one place to another, with the meanings of “delivering” or “fetching” the sword. Notwithstanding this inaccurate or even over comprehensive word

choice, it is possible for both interlocutors to comprehend the intended meaning of the propositions through the reliance on the circumstances surrounding those speech acts.

The perlocutionary effects upon Rena that is resulted from Temurra's announcement of selling is exactly the ones aimed by Temurra, which are having Rena become aware of the sale offer and also getting Rena to make a bid on the sword. Rena, however, does not succeed in producing her intended perlocutionary effect of having Temurra accept her bid on the sword

At last, both of the interlocutors manage to have their intended results from their propositions produced upon each other, which are accepting one's establishment of an offer for the item and one's proposal for its shipment, assuring therefore the success of their communication.

Considering the information exposed about trading within Tibia and its major importance to players in many senses, such as obtaining tools and other personal items that aid the players' living in Tibia world. Thus, since trading (buying and selling) involves communicative interactions, the ability to successfully communicate is decisive to the success of such activity. In addition, the interactions related to trading are, in general, the simplest ones, easing the communication for beginners, since the utterances in them may be composed basically by the items to be traded, the offer and the purpose of each person in the interaction.

3rd A thief

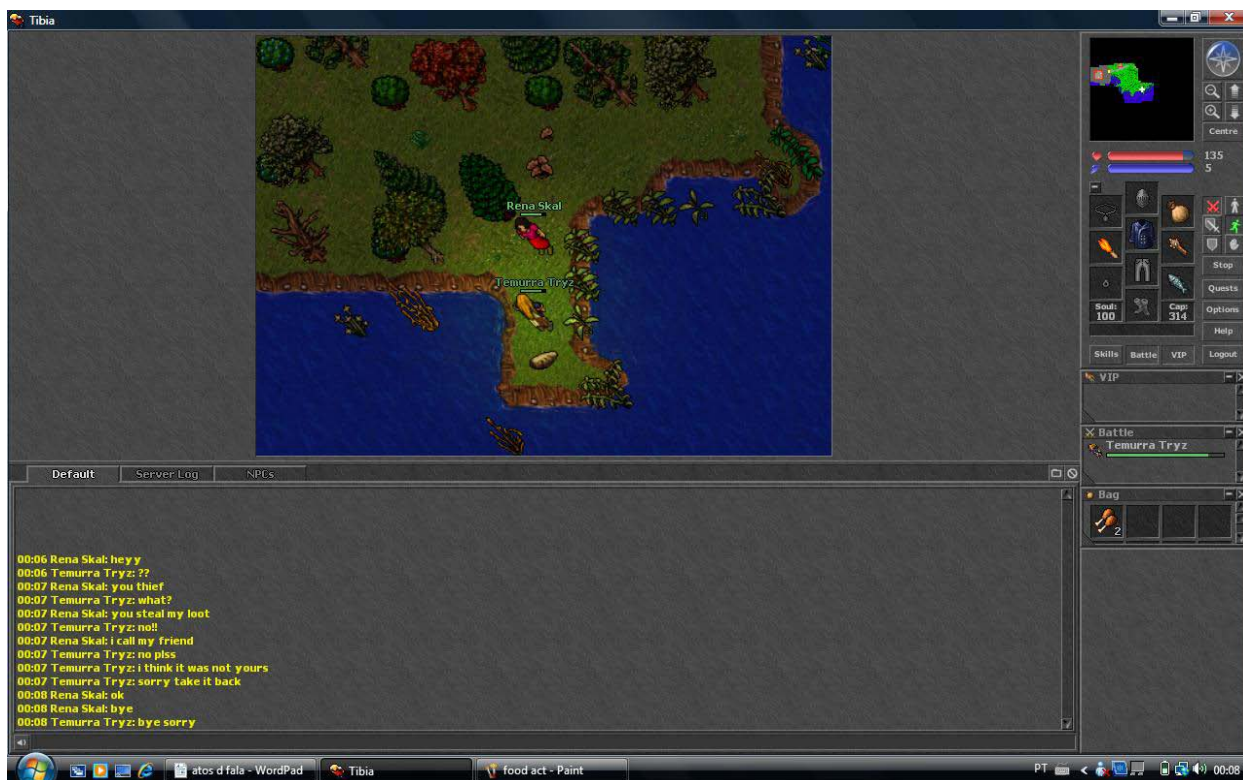


Figure 3: A thief
Source: Tibia game

Situation/context:

When noticing that her personal items are not where she left, Rena presumes Temurra had taken them, since she has a record of stealing items from other players when they are not near their loots. They have the following conversation:

Rena: hey

Temurra: ??

Rena: you thief

Temurra: what?

Rena: you steal my loot!

Temurra: no!!

Rena: I call my friend

Temurra: no “plss”

Temurra: I think it was not yours.

Temurra: sorry take it back

Rena: ok

Rena: bye

Temurra: bye sorry

Rena, the speaker, assumes the hearer has done something bad and that it is not clear that somebody else may have done that something. Rena, speaker, by saying “you thief”/ “you steal my loot”, attributes a certain negative aspect to the hearer, in this case, a charge of stealing, characterizing the act of **accusing**.

When Temurra denies having stolen the loot, Rena threatens to call her friends for back up. Rena is aware that calling her friends would not be beneficial to Temurra, since they would probably fight her, and also both Temurra and Rena know that this event would not happen in the normal course of events. Those circumstances constitute the felicity conditions for **threatening**. Thus, by saying “I call my friends”, Rena commits to do what is the content of her utterance, characterizing the act of threatening.

Inside the main acts of accusing and threatening, there are the following ones: The act of **denial** performed by Temurra towards Rena’s accusation, by saying “no!! Later, we have Temurra’s act of **begging** Rena not to call her friends for backup, followed by the act of **claiming** that she did not think the loot was Rena’s. In the end, we find the act of **apologizing**, when Temurra tells Rena she is sorry for what she did, followed by Rena’s act of **accepting** her apology and last, there are the acts of **greeting** from both characters when they leave.

In the second speech act within this dialogue, notwithstanding its proposition is composed only by question marks, lacking the actual content of the question, it is possible to assume that the speaker, Temurra, is somehow questioning Rena’s greeting act. Temurra’s saying probably accounts for the fact that she did not expect Temurra to approach her. Through this example we can see that words or sentences are not the real basic units of communication, but rather the speech acts, despite their at times uncommon locutionary composition.

In Rena’s illocutionary act of accusing, the proposition “you steal my loot” does not present a correct past inflection of the verb “steal”, probably because the irregular past form of this verb is not often used by them or even unknown to them. However, as in these

circumstances the most appropriate verb tense would be the past one, the hearer is able to conclude that action of “stealing” was meant to be taken as a past action. The same process occurs with the proposition “I think it was not yours”.

As Temurra begs for Rena not to call her friends, we can conclude that Rena has achieved her intended perlocutionary result upon Temurra. The result is Temurra’s realizing that not obeying the demand to leave the area would impel Rena to do something that is harmful to her, that is, in this case, calling her friends for backup to fight Temurra. Moreover, Temurra also manages to generate her aimed results through her speech act: getting Rena to believe she took it because she was not aware the loot belonged to Rena and to therefore leave her (Temurra) alone.

In this situation, the effective interaction between players assured their relationship in as members of the game society and the safety or even survival of Temurra, who could have been defeated by Rena and her friends. Thus, Temurra had to, specifically, be able to produce speech acts to defend herself from Rena’s accusations and threats and Rena, on the other hand, had to be able to claim for her stolen loot, which is essential to her living in the game world.

4th Power abuse

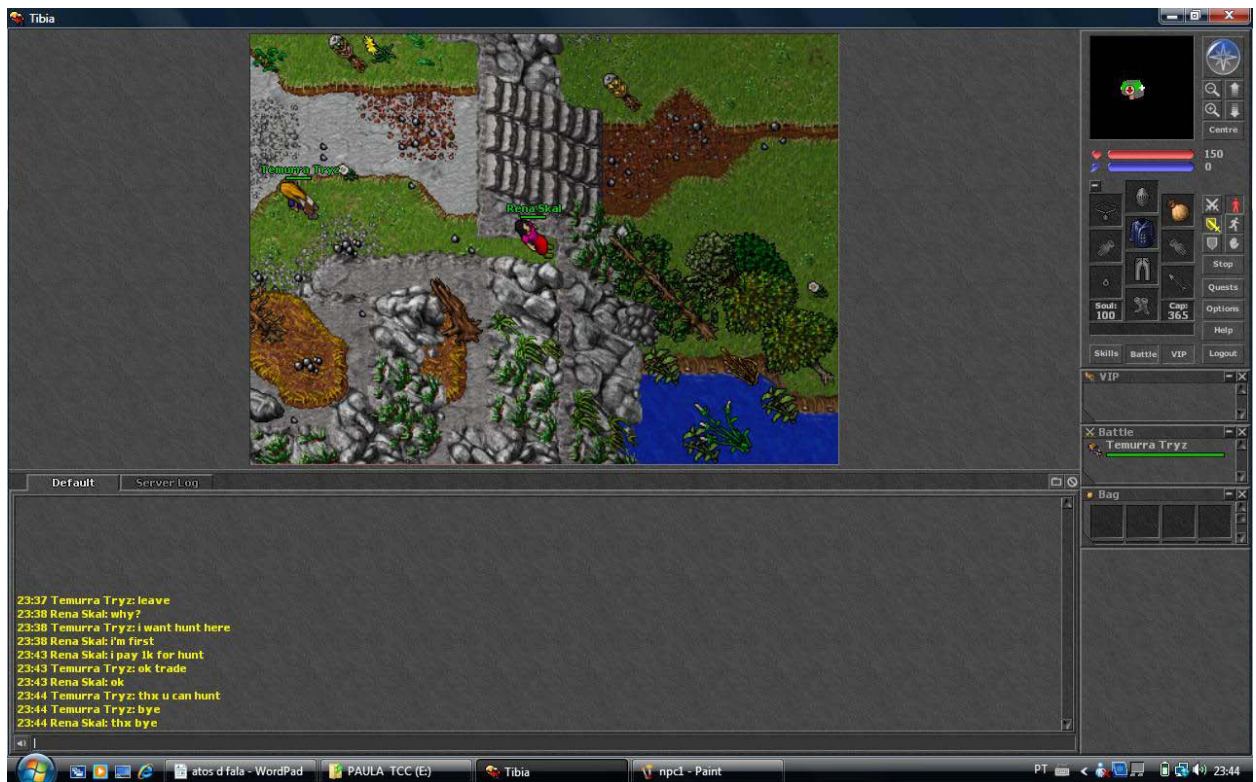


Figure 4: Power abuse
Source: Tibia game

Situation/context

Rena is a low level character and Temurra has a higher level than Rena, which implies in Temurra holding more power and strength than Rena and being therefore, according to Tibia's rules, able to defeat Rena, who holds less power. Rena wants to hunt in that territory all by herself, so that she can get all the reward to herself. Thus, seeing Rena hunting creatures in the same territory as her, Temurra abuses of her power to expel Rena from that territory. They have the following interaction:

Temurra: leave

Rena: why?

Temurra: I want hunt here

Rena: I'm first

Rena: I pay 1k for hunt

Temurra: ok trade

Rena: ok

Temurra: thx u can hunt

Temurra: bye

Rena: bye

Temurra has a certain position of authority over Rena in virtue of her higher level, which attributes good deal of strength to her utterances towards Rena. Thus, she does not need to express a good reason for Rena to act according to what Temurra tells her to. This situation constitutes the **felicity conditions for demanding**. Temurra authoritatively tells Rena to act according to the content of her (Temurra's) utterance, designating the **act of demanding**.

Within the act of demanding, we have the following acts: First, the act of **asking a question**, at the moment Rena asks Temurra why she must leave that place, followed by Temurra's act of **answering** that question, by saying "I want hunt here". Rena opposes to Temurra by performing the act of **claiming** that she was there first, but anyway she carries out the act of **offering** a certain amount of money to keep hunting there, which is followed by Temurra's act of **accepting** that offer. In the end, we have Temurra's act of **allowing** Rena to hunt there and both characters' acts of **greeting** when they leave.

The meaning of the first proposition, which constitutes the act of demanding, is easily comprehended by the hearer since both interlocutors are present in the same hunting area in the game world. Such circumstances, known as speech events, as described before, prove to be crucial to determine the construction of a speech act's proposition.

By saying "I'm first", Rena means she arrived in the hunting area first, before Temurra. However, as pointed out before, the speech events provide aid for the hearer Temurra to infer the intended meaning of Rena's proposition, notwithstanding its broad meaning.

Furthermore, we can see that, at times, in their dialogues, players commit simple grammar mistakes such as mixing up the use of the prepositions for and to, as in "I pay 1k for hunt", which are quite common among Brazilian speakers. Nonetheless, within the present context, the proposition does not leave any room for confusion concerning its meaning.

Finally, it is curious to notice that, as speakers, after figuring out the meaning of certain a number of words, the players manage to use them in their broad sense, instead of only memorizing their meaning to use in a narrow number of situations. This process is beneficial for the speakers to improve their communication skills through the diversified use of the vocabulary they possess.

As Temurra accepts Rena's claim and offers to remain hunting in the territory, we can see that Rena has achieved her intended results upon Temurra, that is, she got Temurra to allow her to remain there. As to Temurra, we can realize she produced her aimed perlocutionary effects upon Rena through the fact that the last made an offer to remain in the area in reason of the risk she would take by claiming to share the targets with Temurra with nothing to give in return. In other words, Temurra has managed to have Rena take her utterance as a strong reason to do what is in the proposition in reason of Temurra's authority.

Rena stood up to Temurra's demand, by saying she had arrived there first and hence should have a chance to remain there somehow and this way negotiates with Temurra to keep hunting in the area. If she had not done so, she could have wasted her chance to keep hunting in that territory or even have been killed by Temurra, who is a stronger character. Temurra, on the other hand, by claiming her territory, attempted to assure the totality of targets in the area for her benefit, since killing targets equals to collecting points in the game. Thus, either way, both characters partook the dialogue in order to guarantee their advancement and authority in the game.

The next two acts (5th and 6th) are very similar considering the context and the communicative conditions. However, there are some differences between them that will be now analyzed.

5th Location

Figure 5: Location 1
Source: Tibia game

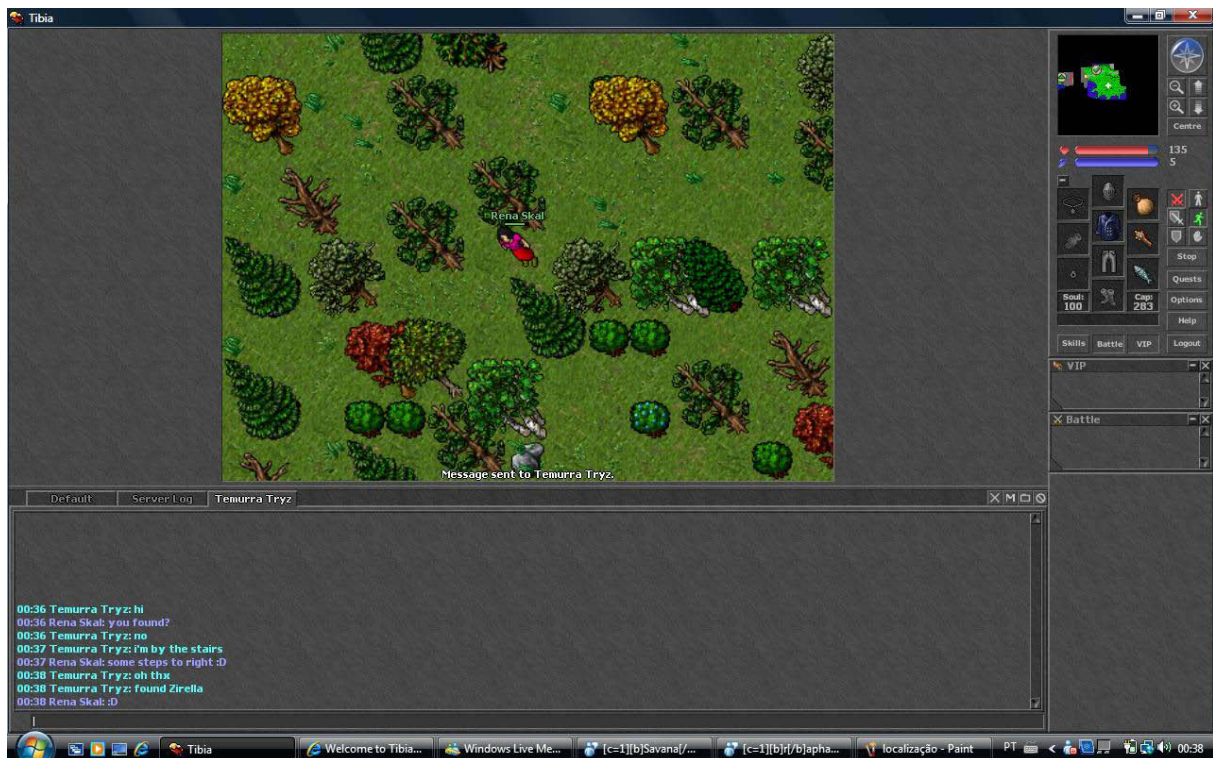


Figure 6: Location 2
Source: Tibia game

In the 5th situation, Temurra is looking for the NPC Zirella, in order to request a mission (quest). As she cannot find Zirella, she asks Rena about the NPC's whereabouts. Rena gives Temurra the directions to get to where Zirella is. Later, Rena gives Temurra more detailed directions as Temurra approaches Zirella's location. They have the following dialogues:

Temurra: hey

Rena: hi

Temurra: where is Zirella?

Rena: its to northwest

Rena: in a house

Temurra: thx

Temurra: hi

Rena: you found?

Temurra: no

Temurra: I'm by the stairs

Rena: some steps to right: D

Temurra: oh thx

Temurra: found Zirella

Rena: D

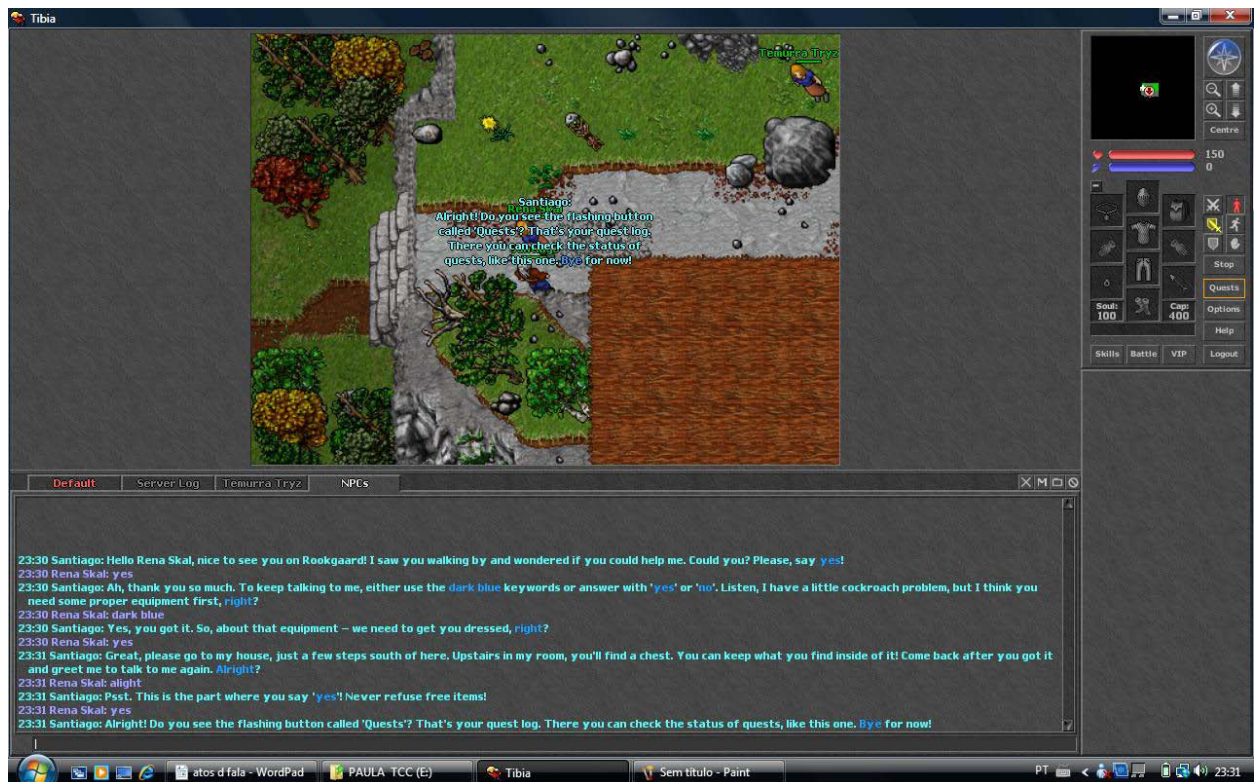
6th A quest

Figure 7: Quest
Source: Tibia game

In the 6th situation, the NPC Santiago starts a conversation with the character Rena. Santiago, then, requests Rena to help out on a quest, and Rena agrees with it right away. Moreover, since Rena is a newcomer in this situation, Santiago provides her with all the most basic instructions for carrying out a certain quest, along with the ones for preparing to set out on a quest. They have the following dialogue:

Santiago: Hello Rena Skal, nice to see you on Rookgaard! I saw you walking by and wondered if you could help me. Could you? Please, say **yes**!

Rena: yes

Santiago: Ah, thank you so much. To keep talking to me, ether use the **dark blue** keywords or answer with “**yes**” or “**no**”. Listen, I have a little cockroach problem, but I think you need on proper equipment first, **right**?

Rena: dark blue

Santiago: yes, you got it, about that equipment – we need to get you dressed, **right**?

Rena: yes

Santiago: Great, please go to my house, just a few steps south of here. Upstairs in my room, you'll find a chest. You can keep what you find inside of it. Come back after you got it and greet me to talk to me again? **Alright?**

Rena: alright

Santiago: Psst. This is the part where you say “**yes**”! Never refuse free items!

Rena: yes

Santiago: Alright! Do you see the flashing button called “Quests”? That's your quest log. There you can check the status of quests, like this one. **Bye**, for now!

As we can see, in both situations, the speakers supply the hearers with some sort of information, in order to guide their (the hearers') actions in the game. In addition, both speakers are involved in some quest. However, the speakers hold distinct positions in the game and, on this account, their utterances vary in strength.

The speaker Santiago, being an NPC, is in charge of assigning quests and guiding the players' actions to fulfill those quests, especially new players. By being in such position, NPCs possess wide and systemized knowledge about the performance of missions in the game world and also about the game world itself. Therefore, they provide systematic information about how to proceed in performing quests and in how communicating with them (NPCs) in the game. Santiago, in this case, by saying “to keep talking to me, either use the dark blue keywords or answer with ‘yes’ or ‘no’”, characterizes the **act of instructing**.

Moreover, Santiago believes his position of authority over Rena makes his utterance strong enough to constitute a sufficient reason for Rena to act according to his utterance and also assumes that Rena does not know how to perform all the actions he instructed her to. Those circumstances constitute the **felicity conditions for instructing**.

In the 5th situation, the speaker Rena, on the other hand, is a character close in level to Temurra, and is not officially in charge of assigning quests as the NPCs, nor does she possess as a wide knowledge of the game world as the NPCs, who belong to the game world system. Hence, she is not in a position to instruct Temurra about something. However, she has some knowledge about the land they inhabit and also about Zirella's location. So, as she is asked about Zirella's location, by saying “its to northeast, in a house”, she is changing Temurra's state from not knowing someone's location to knowing

it, characterizing the act of **informing**. Temurra also performs this same act by informing her location to Rena, saying “I’m by the stairs”.

Finally, similarly to the act of instructing, in this situation, Rena (speaker) presumes that Temurra was not aware of that information before Rena’s utterance, composing the felicity conditions for informing.

Within the main act of instructing, in this conversation there are the following acts: Initially, there is the act of **greeting** when the NPC Santiago starts a conversation with Rena. Next, we can see an act of **requesting**, when Santiago requests Rena to help him out on a quest, followed by Rena performing the act of **answering** “yes” to his request. In addition, Santiago performs the acts of **telling** Rena about his problem to be solved through the quest and of **suggesting** Rena acquires some appropriate clothes and equipment for the quest. Finally, we have the act of **thanking**, when Santiago thanks Rena for accepting to join the quest.

Within the main act of **informing**, there are the following acts: The initial acts of **greeting**, when both characters come across each other. The acts of **asking questions**, when Temurra asks about Zirella’s location and then Rena asks if Temurra has found Zirella, followed by Temurra’s act of **answering** that she has not. Finally, we have Temurra’s act of **thanking** Rena for indicating where Zirella was, and the final acts of **greeting** performed by both characters when they finish the conversation and leave.

Concerning the propositional structures of the speech acts, we can see that, as a way to inform Temurra about Zirella’s location, Rena says “its to northeast”, and by “it” she means the location, instead of producing a complete sentence, such as “Zirella is at someplace to the northeast direction” or “Zirella’s location is to northeast”. Notwithstanding the utterance’s apparent incompleteness, which could carry more than one possible meaning, the operative meaning of Rena’s sentence becomes evident to the hearer Temurra in reason of the circumstances surrounding the dialogue, especially her own previous question.

As in informal conversations in real life, the speakers may omit the first person subject, whenever it is obvious to the hearer, as in the proposition “found Zirella”. Moreover, players at times use informal question structures, which do not follow the standard pattern for interrogative sentences and are usually used to make a confirmation of an issue exposed previously, such as in “you found?.” This last utterance also displays an incomplete structure, as the speaker does not mention what was supposed to be found by

the hearer. However, the previous dialogue composes a preparatory context for both interlocutors to understand this following dialogue, and, this way, what is supposed to be found is omitted since it is obvious to them.

When Rena says “some steps to the right”, she means for Temurra to move a few steps to the right in order to arrive at the exact spot Zirella is at, which is near the stairs. This way, this utterance’s meaning is easily identified since it is a response to Temurra’s statement “I’m by the stairs”. Finally, this last statement is pertinent to the interaction for it is a reference for Rena to guide Temurra on her search for the NPC Zirella, and it also constitutes a preparatory condition for the comprehension of the following utterance “some steps to the right”.

As to the structure of the propositional acts, it is possible to notice that the NPCs, as characters controlled by the game, as in the last situation, produce mostly full and correct sentences, according to the rules of the prescriptive grammar. Nonetheless, as it is probably figured by the game designers that some players might not speak or comprehend full sentence structures as the NPCs’ utterances, the NPCs sentences contain highlighted keywords that facilitate the interaction with those players.

In their interactions, the NPCs encourage the players to use the keywords in the NPCs utterances as answers which, at least for beginners, are mostly used as confirmative replies to the NPCs questions. Additionally, those keywords are often content words indicating the actions, places or objects that are the focuses or purposes of the conversations, which often compose the utterances of players as well as of NPCs, as it can also be noticed in previous dialogues.

In this interaction, for instance, the highlighted keywords “alright”, right and “yes” within Santiago’s utterances are supposed to be used to compose the players’ confirmative or accepting replies to the NPCs questions. If not used as answers, those keywords are aimed to be at least understood as suggestions or confirmative (yes or no) questions.

Such method may be helpful to ease the players’ interpretation of the NPCs utterances, as well as the ones from other players, by focusing on the content words of the sentences or on the sorts of utterances, which may differ in tone, purpose, content, etc.

This way, even if the speaker (player) cannot comprehend every word in a sentence structure, he/she can attempt to infer the gist of certain proposition and consequently the purpose and topic of a conversation. For instance, when Santiago says “right” at the end of his proposition, Rena is able to figure that the proposition in question is probable a

suggestion or advice and requests a confirmation. The same process takes place as players produce their own propositions using mostly content words or keywords concerning the topic related to the utterances and the conversation, as we can often see within the dialogues exposed so far

However, it is natural that such method may at times not succeed, even misleading the players (hearers) to the idea that the speaker's keywords or content words are supposed to be used to compose the hearer's replies. For instance, when Santiago says "use the dark blue keywords or say yes or no", Rena misinterprets the proposition, using "dark blue" as a response, probably assuming that, to confirm Santiago's questions, she could create answers using his highlighted keywords.

Finally, along with facilitating and encouraging the players' communication in the game, the NPCs utterances provide a great means of exposure of players to complete and correct structures of the English language. Hence, players are exposed to a variety of lexical items and grammatical structures, which is likely to encourage them to broaden their vocabulary and to improve their use of English, including its standard grammatical structure

In the 5th situation, noticing Temurra becomes aware of the directions to arrive at the spot Zirella is in and follows Rena's directions, we can see that Rena has achieved the perlocutionary results she intended to by way of her propositions addressing Temurra. In the last situation, it is noticeable that Santiago has made almost all his propositions and illocutionary intentions clear to Rena and has therefore, in general, achieved his intended results upon Rena, that is, having her comprehend what steps to follow in the quest and accept to take them. The only failure in their communication is when Rena misinterprets the meaning of "dark blue keywords", assuming the expression should be used as a confirmation answer, just as "alright", "yes" and so on.

Thus, in this case, Santiago's aim was to obtain a positive confirmative answer, such as "yes" and have Rena comprehend she could use the keywords in dark blue that appeared in his propositions as answers, not use the expressions itself as an answer. This misunderstanding, however, has not affected the general effectiveness of their communication.

At last, the clear and successful communicative interaction between the speakers in situation 5 and 6 is of major importance, for the incorrect interpretations of the instructions

and directions could mislead the hearers to take wrong actions and therefore ruin the purpose of the interactions.

5 CONCLUSION

In the introduction, it was stated that the objective of this paper is to analyze the most common speech acts players are exposed to in Tibia so as to verify the contents of the interactions, what utterances compose these acts, and the circumstances surrounding those acts. So, based on the analyses of the interactions, under the light of the speech theory, I will now summarize the main findings.

Players of Tibia, just like speakers often do in some situations in real life, assume, in effect, for they are obviously not acquainted with this theory, that what is important in their dialogues is to effectively communicate, producing their intended effects upon the hearers, not the exact content or correct full structures of their propositions (SEARLE, 1969). In addition, they assume that the hearers can rely on the MCBs and speech events surrounding their dialogues to infer the meaning and underlying intentions of their acts, regardless of the grammatical completeness or accuracy of the propositions. In short, what seems to really matter to them is conveying their aimed message, using the propositions in English simply as a tool to produce those messages, or, in the terms of this paper, speech acts.

The common dialogues produced in Tibia that are shown in this paper, contain speech acts whose propositional acts are mostly short, key-word based, lacking grammar words and possess greatly lexicalized content words. That is, their propositions are objective and often focused on the lexicon when carrying out a speech act. The players make use of greatly lexicalized content words and often do not employ the prescriptive grammar: lacking grammar words, verb inflection and correct word governing. However, the hearers are generally able to infer the meaning of the propositions and recognize the speakers' intentions, therefore identifying the communicative function being performed.

The players, as hearers, manage to do so by relying on the MCBs (mutual contextual beliefs) and the circumstances surrounding the speech acts (speech events), i.e., the proximity between both interlocutors, the knowledge they attribute to one another and what they assume about each other (BACH & HARNISH, 1979). Thus, even if the speaker's propositions are grammatically incomplete, the speaker assumes it is possible for the hearer to infer its meaning and function based on the MCBs and speech events that take place in the communication within the game.

It was also possible to note that the speech acts performed in the dialogues analyzed in this paper in general present the felicity conditions required for them to be successful, thus assuring the hearers' recognition of the communicative functions of those acts.

This way, although the players often do not happen to use English with its correct and full version, they have the chance of managing to produce successful speech acts in dialogues, that is, speech acts that possess identifiable intentions, whose propositions are comprehended, along with holding the felicity conditions to be performed.

The players, as speakers, therefore manage to produce effective, although not grammatically correct, speech acts, which constitute vital elements to fulfill their missions and perform basic everyday actions, which involve or require interactive and cooperative actions towards others, since players coexist in a virtual game society, actively contributing to its forthcomings and assuring their own survival and progress in the game world of Tibia.

This way, the MMG Tibia provides its players with the opportunity of actually communicating with many others, of producing the minimal units of communication. Even if short, greatly lexicalized or key-word based, their speech acts constitute the tools they need to managing to successfully produce the intended effects upon the hearers, and hence successfully achieving their communicative goals.

Considering what was verified so far, Tibia, as probably many other MMGs, constitutes excellent means of exposure to the English language, providing players with the opportunity of actively performing and of attempting to interpret a variety of speech acts that usually take place among players, their characters and non-player characters (NPCs) in the game.

Playing Tibia requires the performance of several of the same actions as living in our real world does, since players lead virtual lives in Tibia's world, which holds many of the same elements as our actual reality. This way, the fulfillment of many actions or tasks in the game involves communicating with others in order to ask for help or necessary information, to collaborate with others in order to carry out collective quests, to stand up to possible threats or even for the sake of socializing and making friends that can in the future become allies, among others. Hence, communication plays a vital role in playing Tibia.

I hope this study will contribute to the understanding of the communicative situations this game type can offer to learners of English as a second language, since it

provides opportunities and devices to practice the English language and consequently enhance language learning.

As a follow up to this study, I suggest observing players of Tibia, as well as other MMGs, during a period of time in order to have a broader understanding of how players learn to communicate with others, what processes and steps they go through in order to achieve the use of effective communication.

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