

# Character Dialogue Paper Notes

Saturday, April 14, 2018 12:08 PM

## On Character Dialogue as a 'Game Mode':

- **Idea:** Can see dialogue 'event' as a different 'game mode'. Fallout 3 certainly does. For example: the game world is 'frozen' during NPC conversations (and while inventory/menus are open).
- **Connecting 'Blurbs' to 'Dialogue Game Mode 'States':** As I expressed above in defining the word 'Blurb', as noticed with the FS Diagram for 'VH18 Dialogue FSA Experiment 1', and as evident with the Bethesda Games: dialogue selections can affect the game world. Some example selections and their corresponding sequences:
  - [Pay 100 Bottle caps]
    - If player inventory has  $\geq 100$  caps, permit this as a selection choice
    - Then if player makes this selection, decrement by that much
    - Else provide [I don't have that much] as a selection option
    - Then if player makes this selection, NPC yells at them for wasting time and ends the dialogue
  - [<THREATEN> I know you're operating a speakeasy, now talk!]
    - NPC disposition towards player -= 20 points
    - NPC replies with something like 'How dare you make that accusation!'
- **On 'Freezing Game World' during Dialogue Game Mode:** As seen in Bethesda games, game world is 'frozen' during character dialogue (as well as while in HUD menus such as inventory and quest notes). I know how to freeze anything dependent on *FixedUpdate()* by setting *Time.timeScale* to zero (See notes in Unity3D Section)
- **Dialogue Game Mode via the paper:** "...Starting a dialogue puts the player in another Game Mode and the rest of the game world is paused until the dialogue is finished..." (*Page 4*)

## On 'Affective Communication':

- **Idea:** Involves influencing the NPC's disposition towards the PC (or other NPCs for a NPC-NPC dialogue) via emotion-based responses (e.g. Admire / Intimidate / Taunt / Bribe)
- **Implications:** As seen in the Bethesda games, as well as how these responses can ---affect--- the game state by doing everything from setting a character hostile to activating some trigger in the game world; and especially: changing the flow of not only future conversations but the current conversation (via new responses/selections and/or removing now formerly available responses/selections from the current and future conversations)
- **[My Take]:** The Fallout 3 quest 'Wasteland Survival Guide' is an excellent example of this because certain responses will change the character's disposition towards the player as well as dialogue options in such a way that is subtle but affects the 'path' of the quest, rewards given, etc.

## Character Dialogue Design Patterns (Some of the main/highlight ones, as the paper lists A LOT):

<b>Location-Specific</b>	Options depend on where the PC/NPC are (a.k.a. Awareness of Surroundings)
<b>Time/Date-Specific</b>	Options depend on the date and time (within the game world)
<b>Character-Specific</b>	Options depend on characters (including player) involved in conversation
<b>Relation-Dependent</b>	Options depend both characters' dispositions with each other
<b>Faction-Dependent</b>	Options depend on character's affiliation with entities in the world
<b>Context-Dependent</b>	Options depend on events within the game world (e.g. status of quests)
<b>Eavesdropping</b>	Options become available as player overhears NPC-NPC conversations (e.g. Oblivion)

- **Faction-Dependent: Note** Extends *Relation-Dependent*, could even be part of it. Also, an example of this pattern is the idea that a Brotherhood of Steel soldier probably won't have a friendly chat with his Enclave counterpart.
- **Eavesdropping Trivial Note:** Supported by NPC-NPC dialogues (as seen in Tamriel's many inns and town plazas)
- **Oblivion Note:** The paper states that many of these were first identified [via academic papers] in Oblivion.

#### On Morrowind (and Bethesda successors) Dialogue System:

- **Main Mechanism:** Player initiates and takes control of the dialogue, ergo is Single-Initiative Turn-Taking
- **What about NPC-NPC? [My Take]:** One of the NPC's initiates conversation, and they use their AI to volley some generic conversation back-and-forth (as seen in the Bethesda Games and infamously - Oblivion)
- **What about NPC-Initiated? [My Take]:** Simply starts off with NPC initiating conversation and PC selecting response versus PC interacting with the NPC; so as both encompass a choice that either the player XOR NPC [via AI] makes to initiate conversation: should be a seamless transition into the conversation 'game state'
- **Implementation Note:** It used "hypertext connected to a database" which parses for a blurb based on all applicable dialogue design patterns.
  - Ergo it "resembles information retrieval" techniques.
  - Oblivion and other games use FS-Based Trees, but likely still require some repository to store the content.

#### On Oblivion Dialogue System:

- **Game Mode:** As with Morrowind - switches into its own Game Mode which 'freezes' game world
- **Main Mechanism:**
  - **Dialogue Cycle:** Player Selects Phrase | Player Hears [Sees] Response | Player Chooses New Phrase
  - **Cycle Heuristic:** Iterates in turn-based manner until either participant ends it (e.g. classic "I have to go now")
- **Phrases/Blurbs:** Pre-scripted (including 'Canned Text') and selection depends on the design patterns listed above.
- **It does use a FS-Based Tree:** The paper says both it and Mass Effect use Finite State Trees.