

Marry Me!: The Roles of Puzzling Linguistics in Designing Clues in Games with Dating Sims Features

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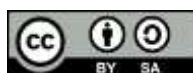
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Abstract

This study explores the role of *puzzling linguistics* in designing clues within games that feature dating simulation elements. Puzzling linguistics theory by Purnama, examines how playful language functions as both a communicative and interactive system in games. Drawing from the concept of ludic language by Crystal, the theory of puzzling language from Danesi, and user function theory by Aarseth, this research identifies how linguistic play shapes player interpretation and emotional engagement. Using a qualitative approach, the study analyzes textual, visual, and operative data from eight games, including *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*, *Stardew Valley*, *Doki Doki Literature Club!*, and *Love and Deepspace*. The findings reveal eight clue types, which are orbital, conditional, collocative, referential, indicative, reflective, reversal, and signaling that serve as linguistic strategies guiding player interaction and empathy. These clues transform dialogues into puzzles that require emotional reasoning rather than logical deduction. The results demonstrate that dating simulation mechanics rely on interpreting tone, subtext, and non-verbal cues, making language itself a form of gameplay. Ultimately, the study shows that love in games operates as a puzzle of meaning, where emotional understanding becomes the key to progress, proving that language play is essential to ludic and narrative immersion. Game developers will be able to draw on this study to craft games with richer dialogue and puzzles that touch players on an emotional level.

Keyword: ludic language, puzzle; clues, dating sims, video games



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Marry Me!: Peran Linguistik Teka-Teki dalam Merancang Petunjuk dalam Game dengan Fitur Simulasi Kencan

Abstrak

Studi ini mengeksplorasi peran puzzling linguistik dalam mendesain petunjuk dalam permainan yang menampilkan elemen simulasi kencan. Teori puzzling linguistik oleh Purnama, meneliti bagaimana bahasa yang menyenangkan berfungsi sebagai sistem komunikatif dan interaktif dalam permainan. Mengambil inspirasi dari konsep bahasa ludik oleh Crystal, teori bahasa teka-teki dari Danesi, dan teori fungsi pengguna oleh Aarseth, penelitian ini mengidentifikasi bagaimana permainan linguistik membentuk interpretasi pemain dan keterlibatan emosional. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, studi ini menganalisis data tekstual, visual, dan operatif dari delapan permainan, termasuk *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*, *Stardew Valley*, *Doki Doki Literature Club!*, dan *Love and Deepspace*. Temuan mengungkapkan delapan jenis petunjuk, yaitu orbital, kondisional, kolokatif, referensial, indikatif, reflektif, pembalikan, dan pensinyalan yang berfungsi sebagai strategi linguistik yang memandu interaksi dan empati pemain. Petunjuk-petunjuk ini mengubah dialog menjadi teka-teki yang membutuhkan penalaran emosional daripada deduksi logis. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa mekanisme simulasi kencan bergantung pada interpretasi nada, subteks, dan isyarat non-verbal, menjadikan bahasa itu sendiri sebagai bentuk permainan. Pada akhirnya, studi ini menunjukkan bahwa cinta dalam permainan beroperasi sebagai teka-teki makna, di mana pemahaman emosional menjadi kunci kemajuan, membuktikan bahwa permainan bahasa sangat penting untuk imersi ludik dan naratif. Pengembang game dapat memanfaatkan studi ini untuk menciptakan game dengan dialog dan teka-teki yang lebih kaya yang menyentuh pemain pada tingkat emosional.

Kata kunci: bahasa ludik, teka-teki, petunjuk, simulasi kencan, gim video.

INTRODUCTION

Puzzling linguistics is a framework that investigates how playful language can be used to craft clues in video game puzzles, especially within the context of dating simulation games. Here, language is not merely a tool for conveying information but also acts as a core gameplay element and narrative device that influences player interaction and deepens the puzzle-solving experience. According to Purnama et al. (2024), puzzling linguistics draws on three key theoretical foundations: the notion of ludic language (Crystal, 1998), the concept of puzzling language (Danesi, 2002), and the theory of user functions (Aarseth, 1997). Together, these theories help develop a comprehensive typology of clues aimed at improving both the gameplay experience

and player immersion. This study seeks not only to identify occurrences of these clue types in the selected games, but also to draw out design implications that assist game developers in constructing linguistically grounded clues for any game with a dating simulation feature.

As for the typology, we identify eight specific types of clues—orbital, conditional, collocative, referential, indicative, reflective, reversal, and signalling. Each clue type operates on a distinct interpretive premise. The orbital clue (a is there for b) builds meaning through associative elements that surround a central emotional question rather than offering direct instruction. The conditional clue (if a, then b) establishes a cause-and-effect relationship between the player's choices and the character's emotional response. The collocative clue (with a comes b) pairs specific words or actions with particular characters, forming recognizable patterns the player must learn. The referential clue links a character's dialogue or behavior to objects, places, or prior events that carry implicit meaning. The indicative clue (a is a until it becomes b) uses the game's own mechanics as narrative instructions that must be deciphered rather than followed literally. The reflective clue (a can be changed with b) blends explicit and implicit meaning, requiring players to weigh denotative against connotative interpretation. The reversal clue (a comes after b) inverts conventional cause-and-effect, rewarding choices that seem counterintuitive or unromantic on the surface. Finally, the signaling clue functions as a direct cue that guides the player's response without concealment or inversion.

In dating simulation games, puzzles do not always appear as traditional logic challenges. Instead, they often emerge through subtle narrative cues embedded in character dialogues. Players must carefully interpret what is said, what is not said, and how it is said in order to respond correctly. These emotional puzzles rely heavily on the player's ability to detect tone, infer implied meaning, and empathize with the character's situation.

Chess (2017) noted that dating sims rely on narrative choices and emotional management rather than traditional gameplay mechanics. Players are not challenged by physical dexterity or spatial puzzles, but by their ability to navigate emotional contexts. This marks a fundamental shift in how challenge and reward are constructed in such games, placing greater emphasis on empathy and interpretation. Successful gameplay in dating sims often hinges on the player's skill in decoding unspoken tensions, underlying emotions, and subtle shifts in tone similar to real-life conversations. To illustrate this, consider the following dialogue choice from the Blue

Heart Event of Elly in *Story of Seasons Friend of Mineral Town*, where the player must interpret her emotional state to choose the most appropriate response:

Elly: But I'm wondering now if maybe I've been too soft on him.

If I'm to blame for his bad behavior

Elly: What do you think, (player name)? I want your honest opinion

(Marvelous, 2020)

Player: a. He's out of control.

b. A gentle approach is valid.

The illustration above is an example of an in-game narrative based on the player's choice, where players must interpret Elly's emotional circumstances to decipher the puzzle. It is not limited only to the usage of linguistic cues. Still, players are obliged to identify any visual cues from the NPCs to avoid the unpleasant consequences that the players must undergo. This can be evidence that in-game language and particular romantic feelings are applicable in the context of a linguistic puzzle.

Given this connection, it is necessary to situate the phenomenon within the broader scholarship on language and puzzle design in games, as several relevant studies have addressed how linguistic elements function as a form of ludic challenge. These studies examine the semantic, logical, pragmatic, and re-interpretive approaches in the linguistic puzzle (Sawyer, 2010) and ludic language in the in-game puzzle (Purnama et al., 2024). Another study about puzzles in games has previously studied around its fundamentals (Adams, 2014), cognitive function (Aliyari et al., 2022), and effects on learning (Li, 2023). Lastly, but importantly, the experience of romantic love through digital games based on traditional romance is examined (Ntelia, 2020).

The gap that we found in previous research is in the form of the dating aspect, often only seen as an interaction with NPCs that serves as fan service and entertainment (Brierley-Beare, 2025; Saito, 2021). What actually builds a romantic relationship with a character in the game is giving gifts they like and choosing the right dialogue. As well as understanding the various character traits, all of which also involve problem-solving elements that can be studied as hidden puzzles in in-game design. The dialogue acts as an emotional puzzle where the clues are embedded in the pragmatic elements of her speech, her hesitation, her reflective tone, and her use of emotionally charged memories. The player must interpret these subtle linguistic and visual cues such as a sigh, a downward gaze, or a soft smile to arrive at the

empathetic response. Choosing “a gentle approach is valid” affirms her efforts, validates her emotions, and strengthens the relationship, while the harsher option risks emotional disconnection.

The analysis in this study does not focus only on verbal cues, despite the term puzzlinguistics highlighting language. After considering ludic language as co-text with visual and operative game elements in Purnama et al. (2024), the present analysis assumes that the dialogue, character expressions, environmental imagery, and interactive mechanics are integrated sign systems, all working together to create each of the adopted clue types. This multimodal perspective is mirrored in the categories of data used in the Method section (textual, visual, operative), which reflect the entire spectrum of cues analyzed, and not just the linguistic content.

Method

This study employed a qualitative approach to describe the patterns of in-game puzzles embedded within the dialogue and mechanics of dating simulation games. To ensure a systematic and replicable process, data collection was carried out through four stages: first, game selection involved selecting games that feature dating simulation elements as their core or supporting mechanic, based on the criteria and rationale outlined in Table 1 and Table 2. Second, game observation was carried out by directly playing through the selected games, with particular attention paid to dialogue segments and romantic events in which the game presented the player with a choice tied to the NPC's emotional state. Third, data recording involved capturing these dialogue segments through screenshots, which preserved both the textual content and the accompanying visual and contextual cues, and the coding process involved classifying the recorded data according to the puzzlinguistics typology proposed by Purnama et al. (2024).

Table 1. Data Source

Game Titles	Publisher/Developer	Genre
A Date With Death	Two and a Half Studio	RPG
Goddess of Victory	Shift UP Corporation	TPS-RPG
Story of Season Friend of Mineral Town	Marvelous	Life Simulation
Stardew Valley	ConcernedApe	Life Simulation
Kingdom Come Deliverance	Warhorse Studio	Action-RPG
Doki Doki Literature Club!	Team Salvato	Visual Novel
The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt	CD Projekt	Action-RPG
Love and Deepspace	InFold Pte. Ltd.	3D Dating Sim

The data provided were chosen based on puzzles within any romantic occurrence involved in the game, whether the puzzle serves as a core mechanic of the game or is merely a feature to immerse the players. The essential criteria of these games are located only in the purpose of the dating simulation feature, to unlock the romance-related content. As long as the players can take the delight and pleasure of romantic content by solving the puzzles, any game with such a feature is eligible to be included in the data.

The collected data were analyzed by implementing the theory of Spradley (1980), with four steps deployed to analyze the data. The first step was initiated by making a domain analysis to identify data relevant to the objectives of the study. Taxonomic field analysis is applied for the second step to classify the collected data into specific analytical categories. As for the third step, componential analysis is conducted to examine the relationships, distinctions, and semantic characteristics of the data. The final fourth step identifies the cultural theme, aiming to identify broader patterns of meaning emerging from the collected data. Last but not least, to ensure the validity of the data analysis, the classification of clues was validated by an expert validator, an academic in linguistics with a research concentration in its application to video games. The validator reviewed the coding and categorization of the eight clue types to confirm that the classification accurately reflected the theoretical framework and was consistently applied across the collected data.

Table 2. Game Selection Reasons and Game Summary

Game Titles	Reasons	Summary
Doki Doki Literature Club!	In Doki Doki Literature Club!, the language-based puzzle is included with the dating simulation feature. It is captivating to understand the typological clue puzzlinguistic in a visual novel game.	Doki Doki Literature Club! is a visual novel video game with a dating simulation feature.
A Date with Death	In A Date with Death, the language-based puzzle is included with the dating simulation feature. It is	A Date with Death is a visual novel video game with a dating simulation feature.

	intriguing to understand the typological clue puzzlinguistic in a visual novel game.	
Story of Season Friend of Mineral Town	Serves as a foundational example of romance gameplay, where affection growth depends on correctly interpreting dialogue and behavioral clues, aligning closely with the concept of hidden puzzles.	A classic farming and life-simulation game where players manage a farm, interact with townsfolk, and pursue romance through gifts, heart events, and dialogue choices leading to marriage.
Goddess of Victory: Nikke	Demonstrates how romance is gamified as a progression puzzle, where linguistic and behavioral cues guide players in building intimacy within a gacha framework.	Gacha game where players command squads of android soldiers ("Nikkies") while also building emotional bonds through dialogue, gifting, and character stories. Romance and intimacy progress as part of the bond system.
Stardew Valley	Represents a contemporary expansion of romance mechanics, where puzzles emerge through reading both linguistic and non-linguistic cues in character routines and social interactions.	Farming simulation inspired by Harvest Moon, featuring crop management, mining, and social relationships. Romance is central, with players forming connections and marriages through daily interactions, gifts, and story events.
Kingdom Come Deliverance	In Kingdom Come Deliverance, the language-based puzzle is included with the dating simulation feature. It is fascinating to understand the typological clue puzzlinguistic in a visual novel game.	Kingdom Come Deliverance is an open-world RPG video game that includes a dating simulation feature.

The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt	This fantasy game features several different love interests, where each dialogue and action we choose will affect the ending of The Witcher game, in which puzzlinguistic plays an important role in determining the player's fate, whether good or bad.	An open-world RPG game where you play as a wizard fighting magical creatures and monsters, but also continue the journey of Gerald the wizard, where every action has an effect on the storyline.
Love and Deepspace	In Love and Deepspace, the language-based puzzle is contained within the dating simulation feature. It is interesting to understand the typological clue puzzlinguistic in a 3D otome game.	Love and Deepspace is a 3D dating sim video game that contains dating simulation features.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Purnama et al. (2024) identify eight types of clues found in game dialogues, namely orbital, conditional, collocative, referential, indicative, reflective, reversal, and signalling.

Orbital clue

Orbital clues work on the principle of “a is there for b”, in which a number of elements in the margin support the clue to the center. This occurrence can be seen in The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt, with Geralt and Shani spending time together after the wedding in the quest A Midnight Clear. The player must assume the role of Shani's personality and what she has done in the past and how she has reacted to others, to interact with her. These are satellite questions which circle the main question of whether the player can accurately sense Shani's romantic expectations. Therefore,

the romantic interaction becomes an interpretive puzzle rather than a direct instruction.

Table 3. Orbital clue in The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt

Quest	Puzzle	Subject	Satellites	Core	User function
A Midnight Clear	How should Geralt respond to Shani to develop their romantic interaction?	Shani	- Previous interaction - Character preferences - Gift choice - Shani's reactions - Dialogue tone	Romantic understanding	Interpretive



Figure 1. Geralt Chooses to Give Shani the Rowan She Liked

The satellite elements give contextual information, which will enable the player to develop an understanding of what Shani likes and dislikes. The game does not actually state what is correct for the player to answer, it is simply surrounded by the elements of the central romantic situation, which the player must fill in themselves. This is a reflection of the orbital clue pattern as the meaning of the romantic interaction is gained from the surrounding contextual clues and the main question of the relationship. This also helps to substantiate the thesis that gameplay, related to dating, can change the meaning of dialogue, the behaviour of characters, and the emotional context.

Conditional clue

Conditional clues in games with dating simulation features operate on the “if a, then b” basis, either between verbal or non-verbal expressions. In this context, a conditional clue represents a cause-and-effect relationship between the player’s actions and the character’s emotional responses. In this situation, the game

Stardew Valley in the six hearth event by character *Haley*. followed by the answer choices provided by the game for the player :

- a. *“Relax, I’ll just buy you a new one!”*
- b. *“I’m really sorry...”*



Figure 2. Conditional clue with visual of Haley

During the event, Haley told the player that she has lost her grandmother’s bracelet, an item of deep sentimental value to her. And in the dialog box as shown in Fig. 1, her dialog box displays a sad facial expression, which may indicate that she is experiencing grief over the loss. Then the player is presented with a choice between two dialogue options, each containing a different tone and empathy. This choice affects the resulting emotional outcome, which determines if Haley views the player as understanding or insensitive.

Collocative clue

Operating under the term “with a comes b”, the collocative clue is apparently contained in the poem-writing minigame of *Doki Doki Literature Club*, which focuses on the presence of pairing clues. In this case, each word shown in the paper (a) always comes with the corresponding character’s reaction (b), which later forms the pattern of pairs. This minigame mechanical system is easily understood but also foreshadows subtle hints that later will be discovered throughout the gameplay.

Table 4. Collocative clues in the poem-writing minigame of *Doki Doki Literature Club*!

Objective	Words Picked	Characters
Pick words you think your favorite club member will like. Something good might happen with whoever likes your poem the most!	sugar, parfait, cute, hop, amazing, joy, pain, depression, dream, entropy, melancholy, suicide	Sayori/Natsuki/Yuri

The objective of this minigame is to choose words to create the poem. But before acting, the players must learn the pairing cues such as “cute for Natsuki,” “pain for Sayori,” “melancholy for Yuri.”, on purpose to progress the story. In this scene, players must meticulously choose the specific word that is related to or suits the type of characters available in the game to increase the relationship. Each character has distinctive personality traits which the players must interpret either from their linguistic expressions, visual reactions, or the other’s perspectives. Once the players have decided who they would want to be closest to, they ought to understand which word suits their personality well.



Figure 3. Collocative Clue with Visual Assistance in Doki Doki Literature Club

Upon beginning to choose the desired words for the poem, there will be three characters that are already chibified or drawn in a small figure. Players are obliged to choose any 20 words, which will trigger the characters in excitement. When one of the characters jumps, it indicates that the word chosen by players is favoured by or uniquely related to this particular character. As a consequence, the players are growing closer to this particular character over time. By continuing to choose the desired word, players are more likely to uncover various extra scenes and dialogue related to the characters. The words provided could also have the possibility of foreshadowing the character’s mental state.

Referential clue

In dating simulation games, referential clues operate when a character’s dialogue or behavior points to something within the game world that holds implicit meaning for the player. Rather than providing explicit instructions, these clues rely on references such as objects, places, or prior conversations that the player must interpret to progress in the relationship. In this sense, referential clues guide emotional or romantic development by linking the characters’ words to in-game

contexts and experiences, allowing players to uncover meaning through association rather than direct explanation. In this case, several dialogues from the character Abigail refer to her interest in adventure and cave exploration activities, as shown in the following examples:

“You came all this way to visit me? That’s nice. So have you been exploring the mountain caves at all? Interesting. I’d like to go there myself one of these days.”

“If I knew how to use a sword I would be exploring those caves by the mountain lake right now. It’s probably nice and cool in there.”

“Do you ever get an urge to go exploring, (Player)?”

Those referential clues also indicate that Abigail may have a special interest in mineral items that can be found in caves, such as *Amethyst* or other adventure-related objects like the *Ancient Sword*. These in-game items reflect her personality as an adventurous character and serve as implicit cues for the player to understand her preferences. Therefore, players are easily able to give preferred items to quickly boost the love meter.

Indicative clue

An indicative clue is one of the types of clues that is built based on “a is a until it becomes b”. This clue typically emphasizes the in-game mechanics as instructions for players to perform adjustments, merely for deciphering the puzzle. In the case of a game with dating simulation features, implicit hints are often discovered through linguistic or narrative representation rather than physical or mechanical puzzles. Players are not just obliged to acknowledge its narrative but also subtly compelled to seek further cues from it in order to reveal the puzzle. To address the issue, a game by an indie creator named *A Date with Death* is deployed as an example.

Grim: And considering what happened yesterday.

Player: Ah.. yeah..

Player: Sorry for, you know..

Grim: It was foolish.

Grim: You should have trusted me.

Player: I should have, yes.

Grim: You nearly lost yourself, Sunshine.



Figure 4. Appropriate Response Provided If Players Trusted Grim

The dialogue above is the result of choosing the wrong responses in the in-game mechanics. In consequence, players are possibly approaching the mediocre ending or even the unfortunate conclusion rather than the happy ending. Players should have chosen to have faith in Grim from the very beginning, or else they will experience an unsatisfying concluding story. The outcome of the player's decision could differ if they heed the implicit emotional signals throughout the narrative expressions. The proper outcome will be displayed if players have chosen the correct response.

Reflective clue

In dating simulation games, reflective clues operate on the principle that "a can be changed with b". These clues blend explicit overt and implicit subtle hints to suggest to the player that they must refer to either the denotative literal meaning or the connotative implied or emotional meaning clue of a given situation. In the case of a game with a dating simulation feature, this clue compels players to explore the interpretive user function over the configurative. For instance, *Rafyael* dialog from *Love and Deepspace* will further explain the reflective clue.

Rafayel: The thermometer is fine. And so am i. It happens once a year. I just sleep it of

The specific utterance happened when the players is showing concern upon Rafayel. He then responds to the character by convincing that his condition is not very critical. This hints the players implicitly to not worry about his health. While in the denotative meaning, the thermometer is not broken as he is. In conclusion, the reflective clue contained in *Love and Deepspace* is functioned to compel the players by understanding the implied meaning and explicit expression from the narrative elements.

Reversal clue

Working under the premise of “a comes after b”, the reversal clue heavily relies on inverting the relationship of causality. Inverting it means that the intended romance outcome only occurs when players decide to choose the least romantic option available. Therefore, the puzzle challenged the players to comprehend the causal effect contradictorily. Unlike other games with a dating simulation feature, which explicitly instruct players to decide the most romantic or flattering choice possible, an RPG game called *Kingdom Come: Deliverance* did the opposite. The excerpt taken from its romance mechanism below will help to enlighten the matter.

Henry : What are you up to? How would you like to...

I don't know... come for a walk?

Theresa : A walk? I'd like that very much, but I can't right now, Hal.

Give me some time to settle in, will you?

Henry : If that's what you want.

Theresa : It's not you, Hal, it's just this isn't a good time.



Figure 5. Reputation Gained Indicated on Top Left by Asking Her Past Event

The romantic outcome of this dating simulation feature only occurs when players successfully interpret the narrative expressions. Instead of choosing a gentle approach like flattery and any standardized romantic acts, players can gain more reputation by simply being polite and respectful. In this case, addressing her trauma by asking about how she managed to flee and escape the assault will possibly lead players closer to Theresa. Bear in mind that this occupation can only be accessed if players assist her by distracting the aggressors during the war so that Theresa had her chance to flee safely.

In other words, the dating simulation feature in *Kingdom Come: Deliverance* is employed with reversal clues. Which means the intended romantic outcomes only occur when actions seem to appear unrelated or even the opposite of romantic. Thus, the game's dating simulation mechanics are based on the perception of society, personal morality, and non-verbal actions.

Signaling clue

Signalling clues operate on the principle of “a signal about what to do.” Signaling is related to cueing, which guides the player's response or decision. This type of mechanic is often found in games with dating-sim elements that feature narrative dialogue or have ergodic characteristics, where the player can choose their own storyline through interactive choices.

The following dialogue from *Story of Season: Friends of Mineral Town Karen Purple Hearth Event*:

Karen : Going for a walk with (player name) sound like It could be fun

Karen : Well. (player name)? Are you primed for wine time?

Player : a. Let the wine flow

b. Sorry Im to busy

In this case, Karen's line “Going for a walk with (player name) sounds like it could be fun” acts as a direct signaling cue, indicating her interest in spending time with the player. The statement functions as a straightforward invitation that guides the player's response, making it a clear example of direct signaling in dating-sim interaction.

Discussion

The results of this investigation are consistent with Purnama et al.'s (2024) eight clue typologies, which are found in the same corpus even though they are used in a totally different context than that of the RPGs studied by Purnama et al. Their clues resolved spatial or mechanical problems such as locating an item or choosing an attack. However, the same clue types here resolve emotional and relational ones. For instance, the orbital clue in *The Witcher 3*, which orients players toward understanding Shani rather than finding a place. It shows that a clue's "core" can be affective rather than spatial, and this study adds empathy as a necessary interpretive competency alongside Aarseth's (1997) interpretive, explorative, and configurative functions.

The present research shows that puzzlinguistics clarifies the process of making languages integrated into the system of games and dating simulations, extending the scope of puzzlinguistics theory beyond the traditional types of puzzles, namely exploration and combat. The combination of words, tone, and emotion helps to create puzzles that may judge the level of empathy and interpretative ability of a player. These clues could be studied in future research to understand their appearance in other languages or the understanding of players with different cultural backgrounds. It also shows that the language in dating simulation games is more than mere dialogue; it is a game of meaning. Every hint encourages the gamers to solve emotional riddles, thus demonstrating that even love in games can be a game.

CONCLUSION

In this sense, puzzlinguistics may claim to be an organized and comprehensive framework from which to examine the function of clues in dating simulation games. These eight typologies show that this communication is more than a textual dialogue. It is an interpretation requiring players to decipher and process the emotions, intentions, and subtexts provided in verbal and paralingual clues. It is through these clues that romantic exchanges are made into complex puzzles, wherein cognitive and affective energies must be harnessed to discover the meanings of affection, miscomprehension, and revelation as interactive gameplay elements.

The results underline the extent to which ludic language mediates the intersection between narrative feeling and video playing subjectivity. Engaging with Huizinga's play theory through Aarseth's typology of player modes, dating sims labor as playful strategy games, building an interpretative space whereupon meaning is generated through performance and reception. The choices of dialogue, gestures, and narrative turn all work collectively in order to make a linguistic network of romance which have the same experience as if they are having a conversation with a real person. Succeeding research might broaden this typology to investigate cross-genre applications or cultural divergences in emotional expression. Ultimately, this study confirms that in dating simulation games, love transforms into a puzzle, resolved not merely through logic, but also through language, empathy, and play. Furthermore, future studies may explore how the emotional clues and wordplay found in dating simulation games retain their meaning when translated into different languages, and how players' gender or personal identity may affect the way they understand and respond to romantic and emotional elements during play.

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