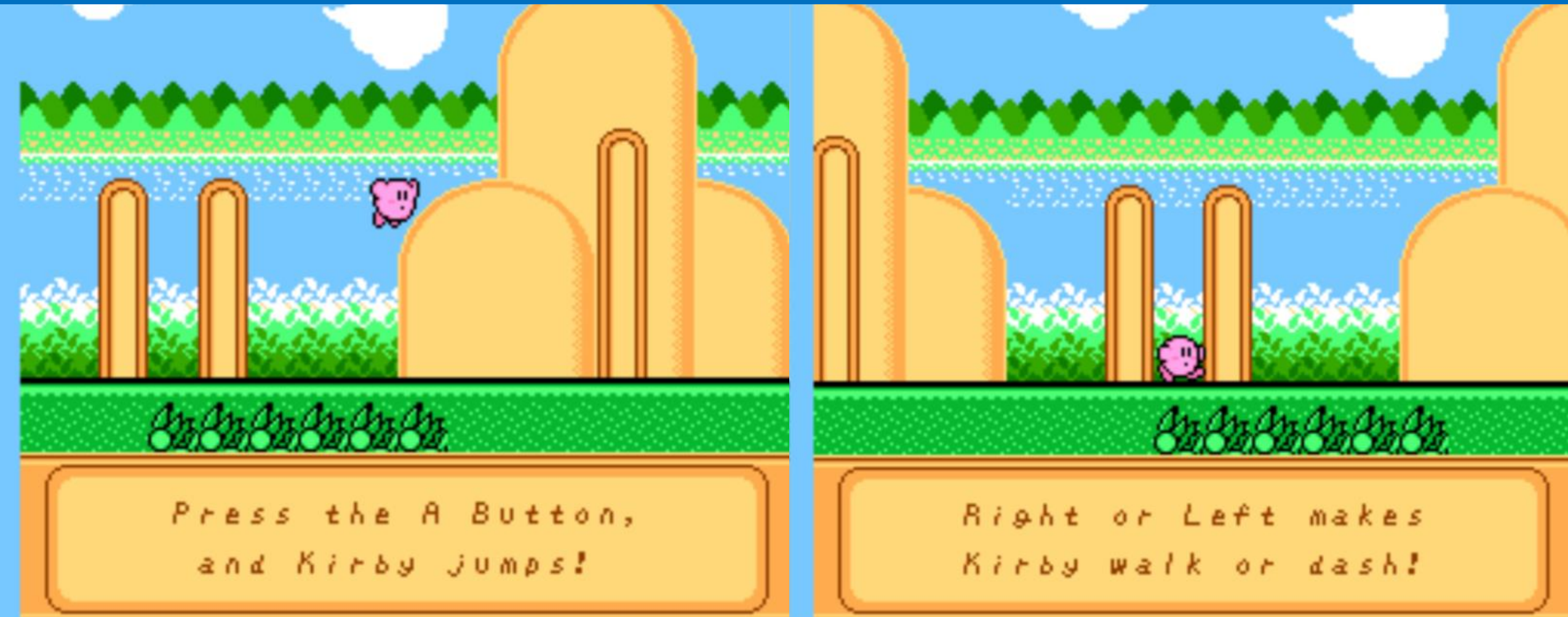


Narratological and Rhetorical Functions of Video Game Tutorials

– The case of NES Games –



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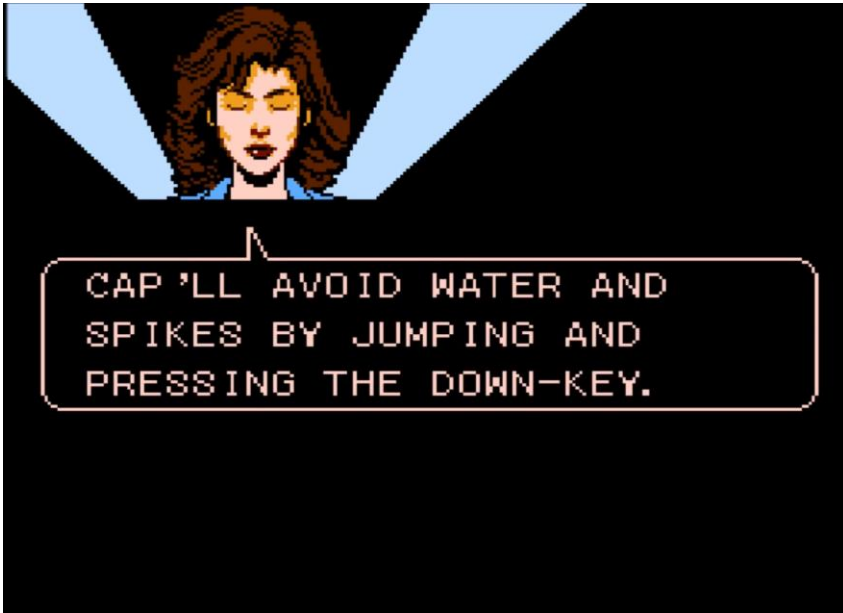
Liège Game Lab – University of Liège

1. The Potential of Tutorials as a Research Object

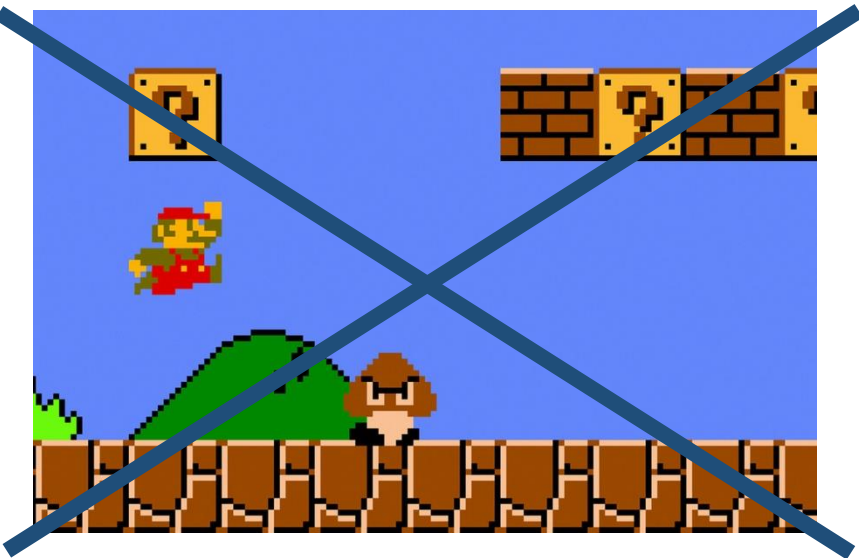
- So far, tutorials have been studied mostly indirectly:
 - as a **game design issue** (Schell, 2008; Koster, 2013; etc.)
 - as **potential tools for education** (Alvarez, 2007; Steinkuehler *et al.*, 2012; etc.)
 - from a **historical perspective** (Therrien and Julien, 2015)



2. Defining Tutorials Through a Database



- First (inclusive) **definition** of the tutorial:
 - **Takes place during the game** (= located after the launch of the game software and before the credits) or appears on the **paratext**
 - The discourse is intended to transmit **utilitarian information** about the **commands** ("press X for X"), the **rules** ("the sword can break the blocks"), the **behaviors** expected by the player ("you can do X") and the **main goals** of the game ("you have to save the princess")
 - The tutorial is a **metalanguage**



2. Defining Tutorials Through a Database

Title	Tested Version	Tested Language	Year	Country	Hardware	Players	Genre	Scope	Support	Temporality	Diegetization	Variability	Interactivity	Avoidability	Content (in game)	Content (epitext)	Rhetorical Strategy (in game)	Rhetorical Strategy (epitext)
1943 - The Battle of Midway	NES ROM [USA] 1987	English	1987	Japan	NES	Multi	Shoot'em up	0	5	2	0	0	0	0	2	2	2	2
720 Degrees	NES ROM [USA] 1986	English	1986	USA	NES	Solo	Sport	0	5	2	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	3
8 eyes	NES ROM [USA] 1990	English	1990	Japan	NES	Multi	Platform	2	4	2	0	0	0	0	5	1	5	2
A Nightmare on Elm Street	NES ROM [USA] 1990	English	1990	USA	NES	Multi	Action-Platform	2	4	2	0	0	0	0	5	1	5	2
Advanced Dungeons & Dragons Hillsfar	NES ROM [USA] 1993	English	1993	USA	NES	Solo	RPG	2	4	2	0	0	0	0	5	1	5	3
Adventures of Lolo 2	NES ROM [USA] 1990	English	1990	Japan	NES	Solo	Puzzle	0	5	2	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	2
Adventures of Lolo 3	NES ROM [USA] 1991	English	1990	Japan	NES	Solo	Puzzle	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	3	1	2	2
Airwolf	NES ROM [USA] 1989	English	1988	USA	NES	Solo	Shoot'em up	0	3	2	2	0	0	2	4	1	2	2
Alien 3	NES ROM [USA] 1992	English	1992	USA	NES	Solo	Platform	0	5	2	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	2
Baby Boomer	NES ROM [USA] 1989	English	1989	USA	NES	Multi	Shooter	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	2	2	3
Back to the Future	NES ROM [USA] 1989	English	1989	Australia	NES	Solo	Action	2	4	2	0	0	0	0	5	2	5	2
Back to the Future Part II & III	NES ROM [USA] 1990	English	1990	Australia	NES	Solo	Multi-genre	1	3	0	0	0	0	2	2	1	2	2
Bad Dudes	NES ROM [USA] 1990	English	1988	Japan	NES	Multi	Beat'em up	2	4	2	0	0	0	0	5	1	5	2
Bad News Baseball	NES ROM [USA] 1990	English	1989	Japan	NES	Multi	Sport	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	2	0	0
Bad Street Brawler	NES ROM [USA] 1989	English	1987	Australia	NES	Solo	Beat'em up	1	0	2	2	0	1	1	3	1	4	4
Balloon Fight	NES ROM [USA] 1986	English	1984	Japan	NES	Multi	Platform	0	5	2	0	0	0	0	3	2	0	0
Barbie	NES ROM [USA] 1991	English	1991	USA	NES	Solo	Action-Platform	0	5	2	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	2
Batman Returns	NES ROM [USA] 1993	English	1993	USA	NES	Solo	Beat'em up	1	3	0	2	0	0	1	2	1	0	2
Batman: The Video Game	NES ROM [USA] 1990	English	1989	Japan	NES	Solo	Run and gun	0	5	2	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	2
Bomberman II	NES ROM [USA] 1993	English	1991	Japan	NES	Multi	Maze	0	5	2	0	0	0	0	3	2	0	3
Cabal	NES ROM [USA] 1990	English	1988	Japan	NES	Multi	Third-person shooter	2	4	2	2	0	0	0	5	1	5	1
Caesars Palace	NES ROM [USA] 1992	English	1992	USA	NES	Solo	Simulation	2	4	2	0	0	0	0	5	0	5	0
California Games	NES ROM [USA] 1989	English	1987	USA	NES	Multi	Sport	1	3	0	2	0	1	2	3	2	0	1
Capcom's Gold Medal Challenge '92	NES ROM [USA] 1992	English	1992	Japan	NES	Multi	Sport	0	3	0	2	0	1	0	3	2	0	0
Captain America and The Avengers	NES ROM [USA] 1991	English	1991	Japan	NES	Multi	Beat'em up	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	3	1	0	1
Castlevania	NES ROM [USA] 1987	English	1986	Japan	NES	Solo	Action-Platform	0	5	2	0	0	0	0	3	2	0	1
Castlevania III - Dracula's	NES ROM [USA] 1990		1989	Japan	NES	Solo	Action-Platform	0	5	2	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	4

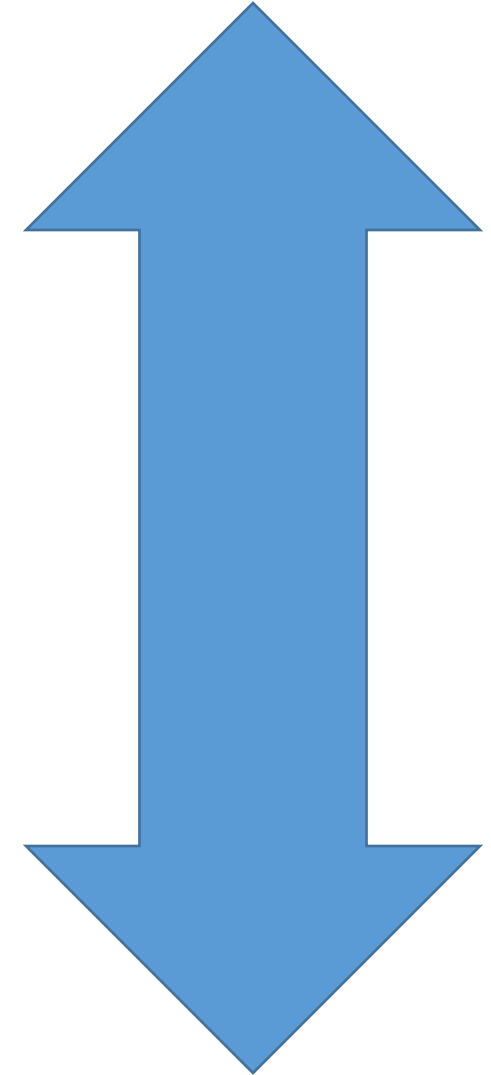
2. Defining Tutorials Through a Database: The Nine Criteria

- **Scope / duration**

0: there is a **tutorial prelude or tutorial level** with explicit limits

1: the tutorial information is **dispersed and repeated** in several levels of the game, which are not exclusively reserved for this function

2: **nothing in the game** is comparable to a tutorial



2. Defining Tutorials Through a Database: The Nine Criteria



- **Support / location**

0: the tutorial information is only conveyed by the **interface** (menus, frames or texts appearing over the game content)

1: the tutorial information is revealed through one (or several) **characters**

2: the tutorial information is integrated into the **game space** (backgrounds, levels)

4: the support of the tutorial is only **the epitext** (manual, indications on the arcade cabinet, etc.)

5: the support of the tutorial is only **the epitext + the peritext** (screen-title, video demo before the launch of the game)



2. Defining Tutorials Through a Database: The Nine Criteria

- **Temporality**

0: the tutorial **does not pause** play time

1: the tutorial **pauses** the game

2: not applicable



- **“Diegetization”**

0: the tutorial is mainly **extradiegetic**

1: the tutorial is mainly **intradiegetic**

2: the tutorial is **partially integrated** to the diegesis



2. Defining Tutorials Through a Database: The Nine Criteria

- **Variability**

0: the tutorial is fixed, **invariable**

1: the tutorial **adapts** according to the player's choices or performances

- **Interactivity**

0: the tutorial is presented in **non-interactive** forms (text, video...)

1: the tutorial **must be played** / is integrated in played levels



2. Defining Tutorials Through a Database: The Nine Criteria

- “Avoidability”

0: the tutorial is **optional**

1: the tutorial is inevitable, **mandatory**

2: the tutorial is **partially optional**



2. Defining Tutorials Through a Database: The Nine Criteria

- Contents

0: The tutorial focuses on **competitive rules** and goals (how to win, score, “beat the game”, etc.)

1: The tutorial focuses on **space and exploration**

2: The tutorial focuses on the characters and the **diegetic context**

3: The tutorial only informs about the **keys** or rules of manipulation

4: The tutorial is **encyclopedic**

Obstructing your way — gangs of enemy characters

 <p>Shyguy - Red A member of the “8 bits” (a club from evil dreams). He wears a mask because he’s shy.</p>	 <p>Shyguy - Pink He moves back and forth on the hills. Carefully avoid him.</p>
 <p>Tweeter It’s a bird with a mask. He hops. Try to get on top of his head.</p>	 <p>Snifit - Red A member of the “8 bits.” He wears a mask and spits the bullets of evil dreams from his mouth.</p>
 <p>Snifit - Gray He jumps before spitting a bullet. Learn the timing of his bullets.</p>	 <p>Snifit - Pink He moves back and forth on the hills. Avoid his bullets with timely jumps.</p>

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Items that help Mario and his friends.

 <p>Coins You can win extra lives with luck and the coins you have collected so far.</p>	 <p>Unripened vegetables They are not fully grown. Just give them to the enemies.</p>
 <p>Vegetables Ripe vegetables. If you pull out a lot of them....</p>	 <p>Turtle shells When you throw them they slide and hit the enemy.</p>
 <p>Bomb A few seconds after they are picked up, they flicker and explode.</p>	 <p>Mushroom block They can be used as steps and for attacking the enemy.</p>

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2. Defining Tutorials Through a Database: The Nine Criteria

- **Rhetorical strategy**

0: neutral tone (assertive)

1: antagonization of the player (gives challenges)

2: encouragement / collaboration (“help us...”, “you are the only one who can...”)

3: invitation to experiment possibilities (tells the player what he will be able to do)

4: humorous or parodic tone

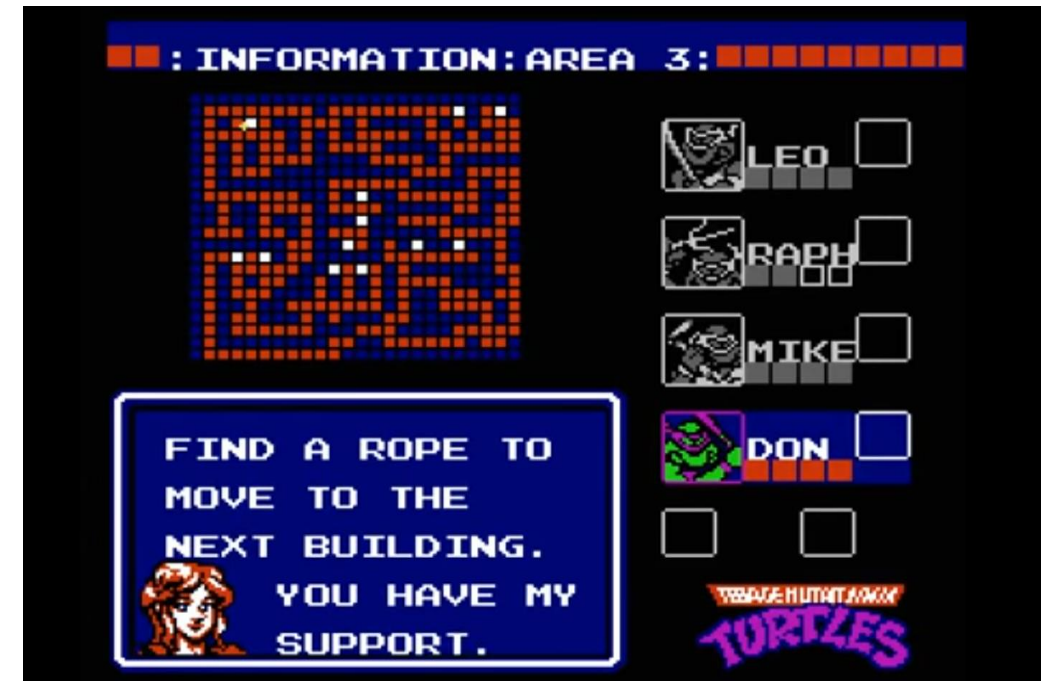
King Hippo's weak point: His body; you can knock him out with body punches if you can make him drop his guard.



The Reckless Bald Bull
BALD BULL

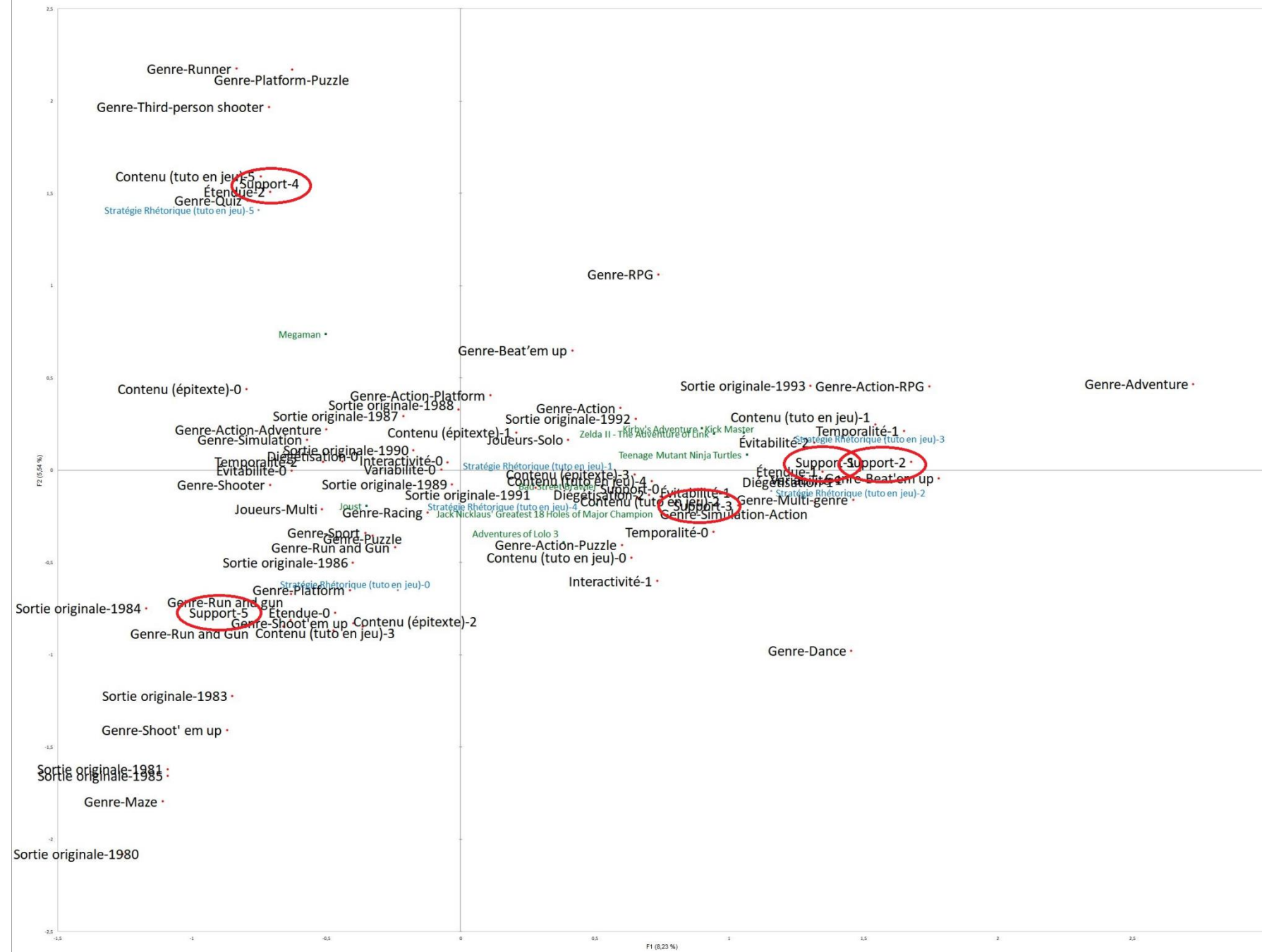
Ranking: Major circuit, Champion
Record: 34 wins, 4 losses, 29 KO's
Place of origin: Istanbul, Turkey
Age: 36
Weight: 298 lbs

You'll also meet a bunch of other hard-punching veterans in the ring, including Piston Honda, Don Flamenco, Great Tiger, Mr. Sandman, Soda Popinski, and Super Macho Man. Are you tough enough to go to the top and face World Champion Mike Tyson?



2. Defining Tutorials Through a Database

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Baby Boomer	NES ROM [USA] 1989	English	1989	USA	NES	Multi	Shooter	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	2	2	3
Back to the Future	NES ROM [USA] 1989	English	1989	Australia	NES	Solo	Action	2	4	2	0	0	0	0	5	2	5	2
Back to the Future Part II & III	NES ROM [USA] 1990	English	1990	Australia	NES	Solo	Multi-genre	1	3	0	0	0	0	2	2	1	2	2
Bad Dudes	NES ROM [USA] 1990	English	1988	Japan	NES	Multi	Beat'em up	2	4	2	0	0	0	0	5	1	5	2
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Cabal	NES ROM [USA] 1990	English	1988	Japan	NES	Multi	Third-person shooter	2	4	2	2	0	0	0	5	1	5	1
Caesars Palace	NES ROM [USA] 1992	English	1992	USA	NES	Solo	Simulation	2	4	2	0	0	0	0	5	0	5	0
California Games	NES ROM [USA] 1989	English	1987	USA	NES	Multi	Sport	1	3	0	2	0	1	2	3	2	0	1
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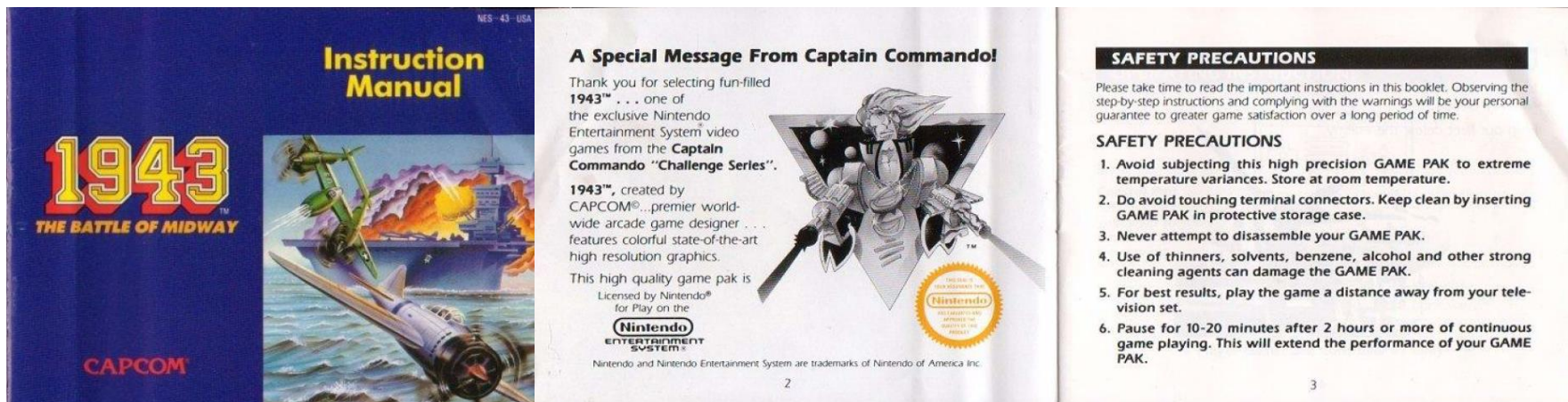


4. In VS Out: In-Game or Paratextual Tutorials

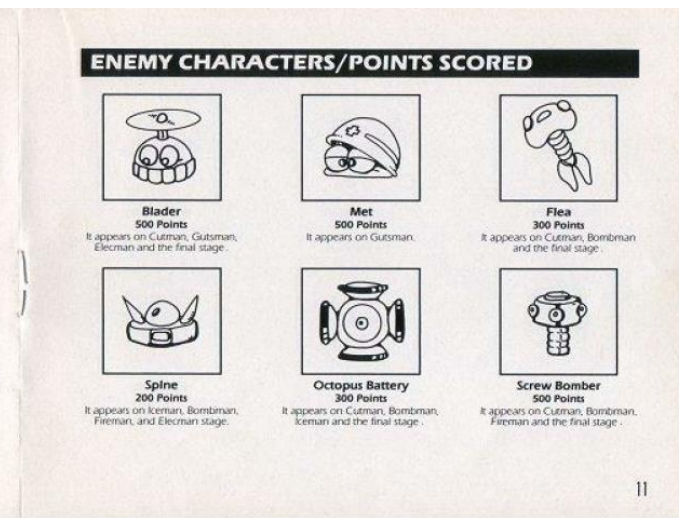
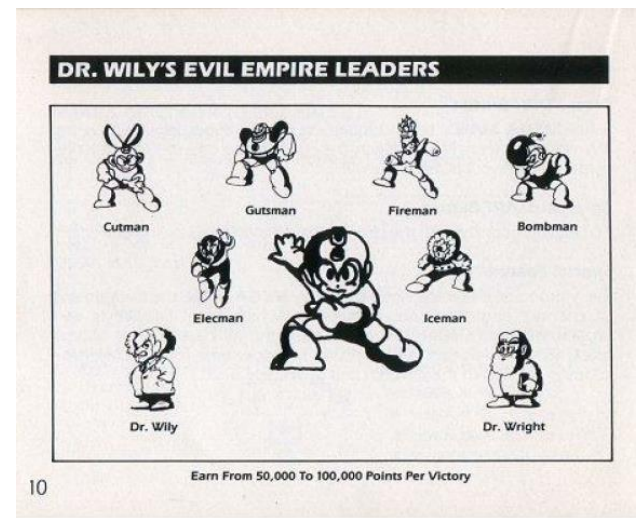
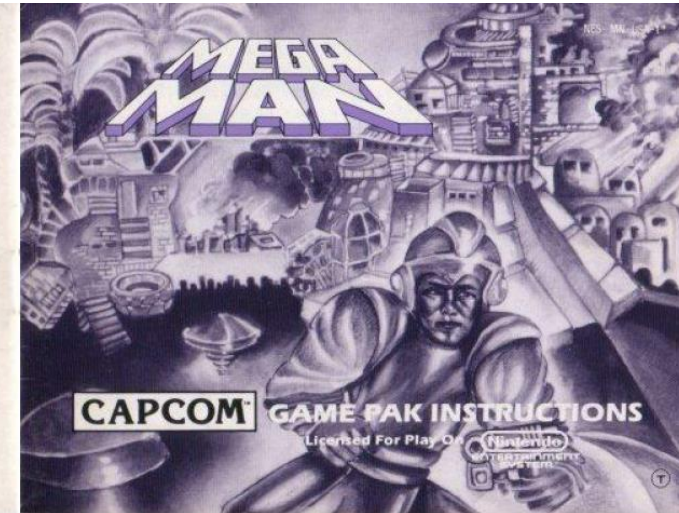
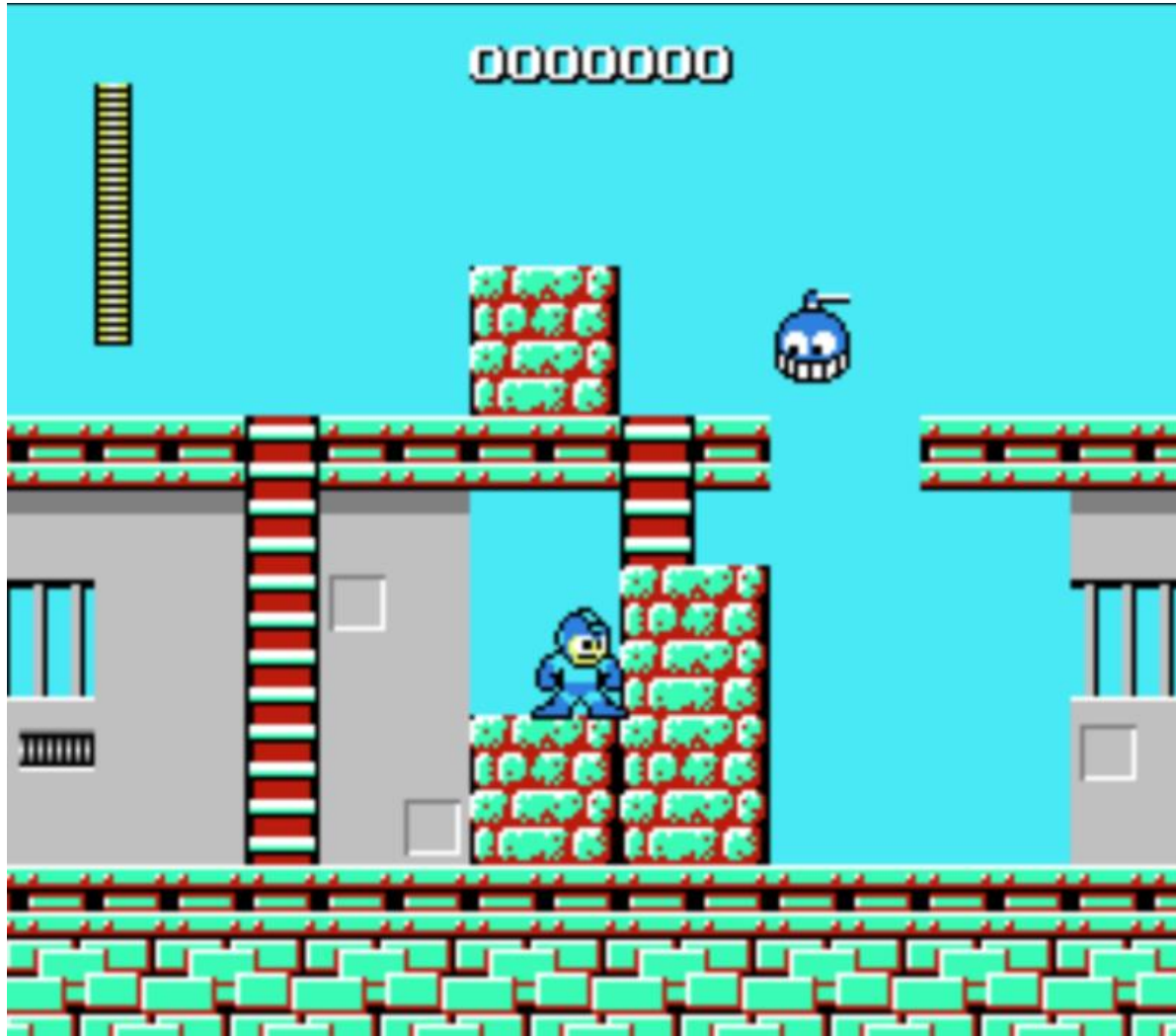
- 2 types of paratext (Genette):
 - the **PERITEXT** (= around the text, but in the space of **the same volume**)



- the **EPITEXT** (= located, at least originally, **outside the work**)



4.1. Mega Man, an Epitextual Tutorial



4.2. *Joust*, a Peritextual Tutorial

WELCOME TO JOUST
TO FLY.
REPEATEDLY PRESS THE
'A' BUTTON



00000004=0

WELCOME TO JOUST
MEET THY ENEMIES

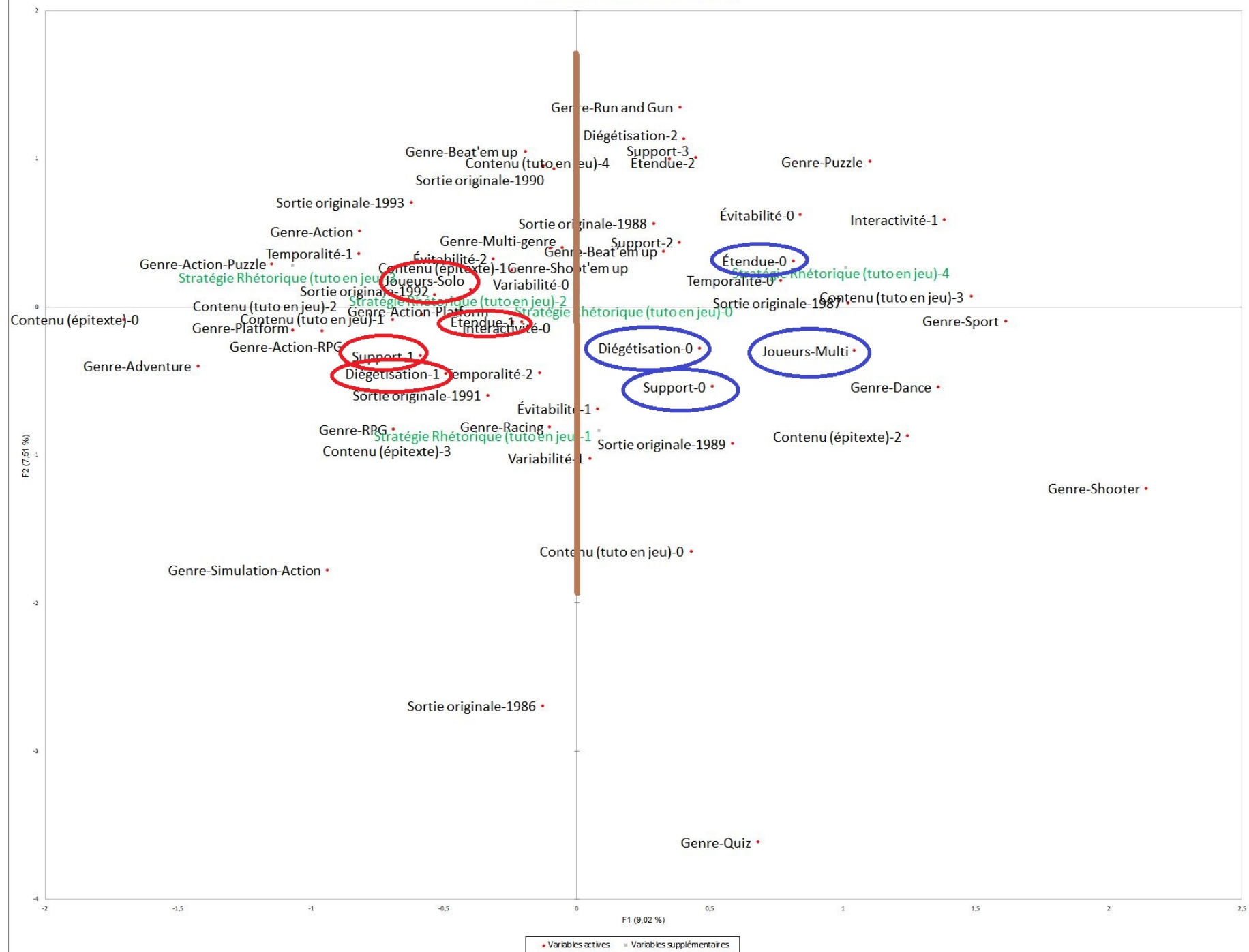
SHADOW LORD (1500)



WELCOME TO JOUST
BEWARE OF THE
'UNBEATABLE?' PTEROPACTYL



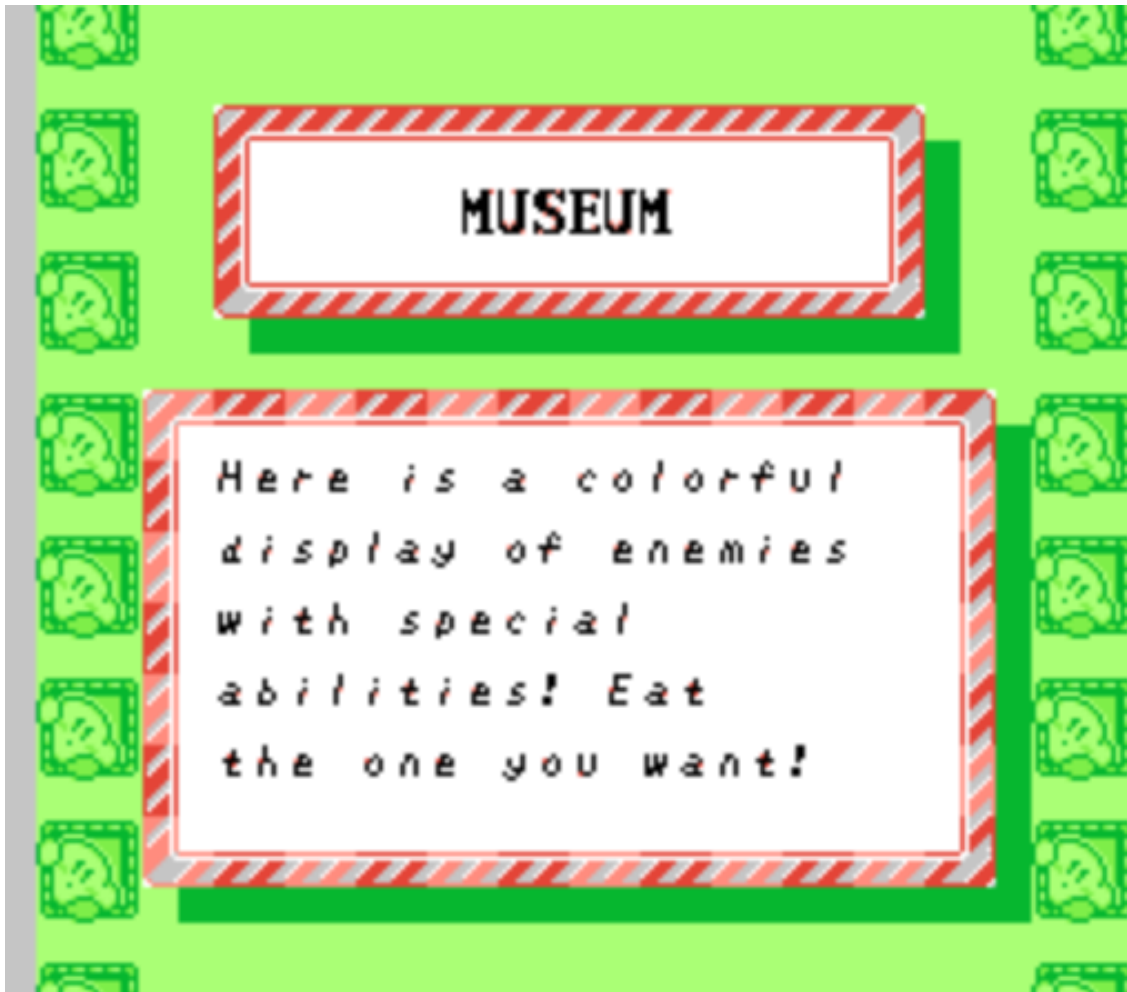
- Variables actives
- Variables supplémentaires



6. In-Game Tutorials

6.1. “Interfacial Tutorials”

Ex.: *Kirby's Adventure*



6. In-Game Tutorials

6.1. “Interfacial Tutorials”

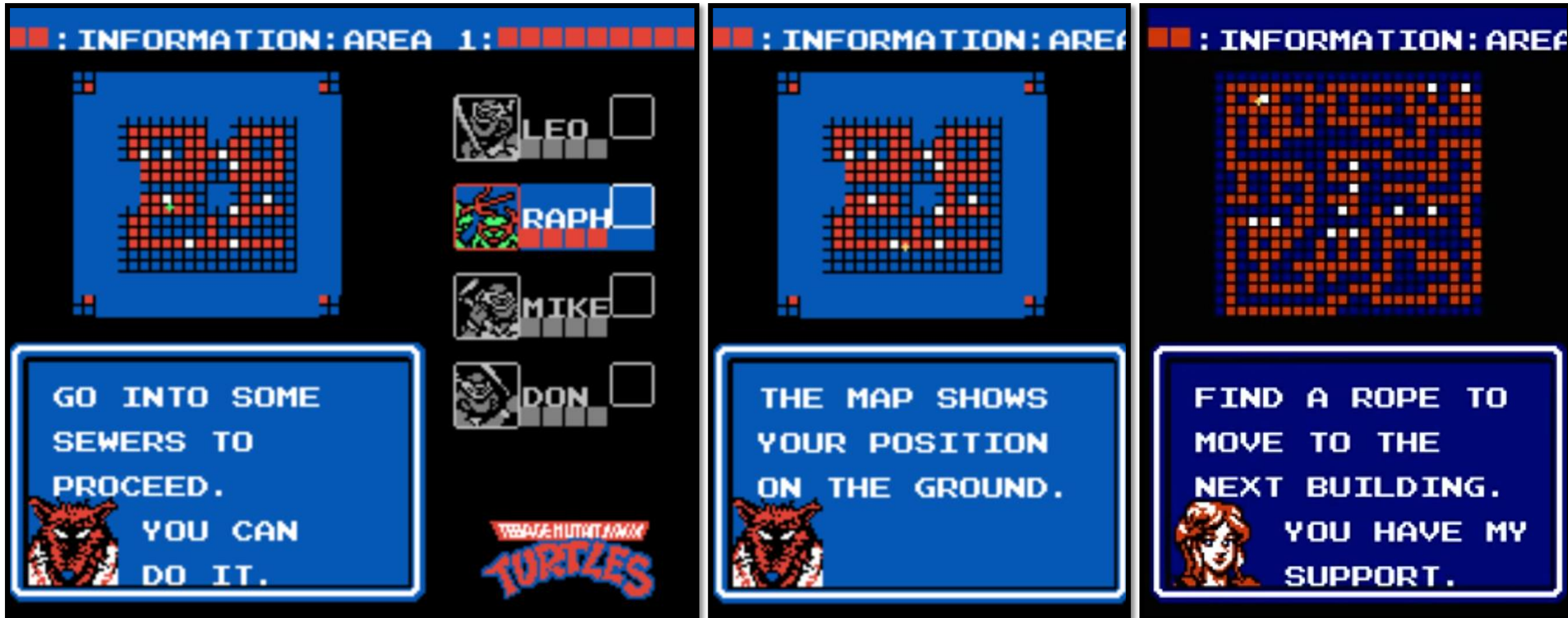
Ex.: *Kick Master*



6. In-Game Tutorials

6.2. “Guiding Characters”

Ex: *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*



6. In-Game Tutorials



6.2. “Guiding Characters”

Ex: *Zelda II – The Adventure of Link*

6. In-Game Tutorials

6.3. Exception: “Training Modes”

Ex: *Bad Street Brawler*



7. Conclusion

