

## **Written Analysis – Communication Design**

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### **Intent:**

This week's Micro-Project centred around the idea of Communication Design.

Communication Design, in a game design context, involves the ways in which the game is designed to communicate different aspects of the game system to the player – the ways in which the game tells the player what is happening in the game, why it is happening. etc. This can be done in various ways: through the use of sound, colour, animation, visual effects. etc.

We were tasked with creating a game prototype that showcased elements of Communication Design. For this task, we were allowed to either create a completely new prototype or build off of our previous prototype on Data Design (the Turn-Based Combat). I decided to do the latter and expand upon my Turn-Based Combat prototype to include more elements of stronger Communication Design.

My intention was to add numerous new elements to the game that would better communicate different things to the player. Following the theme of last week's Micro-Project, some of the decisions made were based upon the Communication Design aspect found in the Dragon Quest series of games, but some of the aspects that were added were not and were decided and implemented by my own intuition.

### **Process:**

I began the process by firstly updating the user interface from the previous prototype. I used more pixelated shapes for the HUD, and I used a font inspired by the font found in early Dragon Quest games. This was to give the game more of an overall 8-bit feel to fit with the Dragon Quest-inspired turn-based RPG theme that I had started in the previous micro-project. I changed the sizing of the UI elements to better fit the new font style: I extended the dialogue box to now fit across the entire bottom of the screen, and I made the menu a little smaller and the player HUD a little bigger.

Next, I wanted a way for the player to always know whether it was their turn or not. I added a new text object in the Player HUD that would always let the player know whose turn it currently was. When it was the player's turn, the dialogue would say "Player's Turn", and likewise it would say "Enemy's Turn" when it was the enemy's turn. At the start of the battle, the text would instead say "Commence Battle!" and after the battle was over (regardless of whether the player has won or lost) the text would say "Battle Over!" I also considered doing this by giving the enemy a red circle around their feet when it was their turn (or something similar), but I felt the way I did it made it clearer when it was the player turn as well.

I then added two simple animations to the game that would communicate to the player when they had hit the enemy, either with a normal attack or with the fireball spell. I created simple drawings for these two actions, gave them simple animations and coded them to appear and then quickly disappear after their respective actions had been performed. These two drawings were not pixelated, so they unfortunately do not fit in with the theme I was going for very well, but this is something I have already considered as a possible update in future versions of this project. The actual communication design was more important than keeping the theme.

The next step was to add simple sound effects that would communicate to the player a multitude of different things taking place. Keeping with the old-school RPG theme, I found an 8-bit inspired sound pack made by LittleRobotSoundFactory to use in my game. I added two sound effects for damage: one for when the player hits the enemy, and another for when the enemy hits the player. Of the two, I assigned the lower-pitched one (which I personally found to be the more negative sounding audio) to the enemy hitting the player, as I felt this would better communicate that this was not an ideal situation (it is a sound you do not want to be hearing). The louder, higher-pitched sound was assigned to the player hitting the enemy, and this is a sound that is a little more pleasing to hear which communicates that the player will want to hear this sound to know something good has happened (i.e., they damaged the enemy).

I added a much longer and louder explosion-type sound for the fireball spell, which indicates the higher power and damage output that the spell has over normal attacks. I also added a short sound to indicate when the player had healed – this would hopefully communicate to the player a positive effect such as gaining health back. I then added different sounds to indicate whether the player or enemy had landed a critical hit – these are a little bit longer and louder than normal hit sounds to show the extra damage dealt by these attacks. Finally, I added two sounds to indicate to the player whether they had won or lost the fight: a sort-of death sound effect would play if the character died to indicate they had lost, and a short musical jingle would play to indicate they had won.

My final implementation was to add visual effects to indicate certain things. To better indicate whether the enemy had hit the player, I added a small screen shake effect that would play upon a successful attack on the player (this was done to coincide with the hit animation for the player hitting the enemy, as I could not do the exact same for the enemy hitting the player). I also added small colour changes to the background when certain actions occurred – the screen would turn red if the player had been hit or lost the battle and would turn green if the player had healed or won the battle. I wanted to have the enemy change to a red colour briefly upon being hit (and also disappear upon dying) but I could not get this to work

### **Reflection:**

Overall, I feel that I was able to implement a majority of the communication design elements that I wanted to and that I felt would aid the game's communication with the player. I especially felt this in terms of the sounds that were used in the game, as I feel sound is one of the most important aspects of communication design – thus it was the area I spent the most time on, carefully choosing which sounds would represent which action or situation. And of course, with games being a primarily visual medium, I also spent some time considering the visual aspects of the communication design – whether it was the animations for the attacks or the visual effects for certain actions/outcomes.

While I was not able to implement absolutely everything I wanted (such as the enemy turning red upon taking damage), I feel I was able to successfully implement the most important elements that I planned. These are the elements which I feel will aid the communication towards the player the most, even the simple ones such as the text which always indicates whose turn it is. In future, I would like to add more communication aspects and update the existing ones. But, for now, I feel that I have made a system which adequately communicates different things to the player and mostly fits the original theme I was going for.