

Reflection on Micro-Project 2 - Communication Design

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Introduction

For this micro-project I implemented communication design into my first micro-project. My goals for this project were to create effective communication design by having little text in the game scene, trying to prevent polishing and then focusing on feedback for the player by using layers of feedback. The feedback will allow the player to understand what the system of the turn based game is doing when the player or enemy attacks or defends.

The main goals of this project were to:

Make a health bar; Change font.; Add music; Sounds for attack and defence; Change character models for individuality; Changing the buttons UI; Adding particle effects when the player attacks or defends.

Adding the Feedback

There are three main mechanics in my turn based game. Using either attack, defence or ability. I need to make feedback that will enhance my games mechanics. Originally I thought the ones listed above were going to do this. However before implementing them I thought about whether or not they show the player what the system is doing or if it is considered polishing or game feel.

Starting with the health bar. The health bar shows the player if they are losing health or gaining health. I could have just left what I had before which was just text that said, "Health:" and then the health next to it. But I wanted to try and reduce the amount of text. The text is also not as interactive as the health bar. Majority of people prefer visual representations and so a health bar visually shows you what is happening to your health when the data changes in the system. It is also much easier to see a big health bar move than to notice a number changing. I show the your health in comparison to your max health, I placed that above the health bar so that it forces you to look at the numbers. Just seeing a slider change in length does not show you the health, but it does make it easier to see the health change.

Changing the font. Through analysis of changing the font, it just makes the game feel better and it is for the aesthetic. It was not communicating anything to the player about the system. This choice was more a choice of aesthetics. Therefore it was decided to not to add this as it did not communicate anything and was adding to the game feel. Game feel does not mean feedback. The same applied for changing the player and enemy models so it creates the feeling of individuality. This adds to the game feel and does not communicate anything about the system to the player.

Adding music. My Original thought through adding music was for the battle to feel more like a battle than just looking at two blocks and then making a decision. However again this adds to the game feel and does not communicate anything to the player. It is not showing the player how the data is affecting the system at any moment during the game and so was not added.

Using sounds for attack and defence was hard to understand its effect. It adds to game feel as hearing a sound from what you doing makes the game feel better than not hearing anything. However adding the sound of attacking for example gives the player feedback that they are attacking. So it was decided to add it as it felt as if it added to the layers of feedback. I did not add sounds for the players special ability as i could not think of a sound that would go well with it. Instead of just adding something random I thought it would be better to just have no sound for it. I also did not add sounds for the enemy attack or defence as I did not want the player to hear the same sounds as what they make when they attack or defend. This can become confusing. I could not think of different sounds to make and so again chose to not add sounds for the same reason for the players special ability.

Changing the buttons did originally feel like it added to the game feel. However I decided to change the way I told the player what their attack and defence value was. It was originally text that said "Attack:" or "Defence:" and then the value after that. But I wanted to minimise the text in the UI as again visuals are easier to interpret. So the sprites that are on the buttons correspond to the sprites next to the attack and defend values. Same goes for the players special ability. So when the player wants to defend they press the defence button which has a shield on it. At the top of their side of the screen there is a shield with a number indicating that, that is what your defence value is. This communicates to the player what their attack or defence value is in a clear way rather than having text which is less inviting than a visual.

Then just to clearly show that the player is attacking/defending or that the enemy is attacking/defending, I added the sprites from the buttons to appear on the screen to show what you or the enemy is doing. So when the enemy attacks for example a sword will appear on the screen showing that the enemy has attacked. Your health will go down in the health bar and the value of your health will change. Same goes for the player.

For the particle effects it was decided to add them to add to the layers of feedback for whether or not the player as attacked, defended or used their special ability. If the player attacks some "blood" will come from the enemy confirming that the player has attacked the enemy. Same goes for the enemy. If the player/enemy decides to defend then some green crosses will appear over the unit to show that they have defended. Then of course the health bar will increase and the value of the units health will increase.

Last thing that was added, that was not originally on my list of stuff to add but felt important, was the text showing the chance that the enemy will attack. This shows the player what the chances are of the enemy attacking and then can make a choice from this probability. The probability can affect your choices, therefore the player needs to know what the odds are of the enemy attacking.

Conclusion

I feel that as a designer I have grown as I critically analysed and tried to understand what each addition to trying to achieve feedback was doing. I felt that I ruled out what was considered good feedback and what was considered to not be good feedback but rather adding to the games feel. There was one more thing that I felt could have been a good addition to the feedback. That was to make the players button UI more transparent when it was not their turn and to make it darker when it was their turn. However I just decided to use text as I did not want to overcomplicate the feedback. It also felt like more of an aesthetics choice as I felt it would look a lot better than

having text rather than being more interactive than the text.

Appendices

All artwork and sounds were made by Dylan Baker - 2093671, except for the player and enemy sprites which are unity defaults along with the divider in the middle of the screen.