COMP3218 Coursework I

Game Notes for Camel Carry

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## Description

Our game is called ‘Camel Carry’. It’s a puzzle game, which requires the player to think of the best strategy for grouping items in a certain time limit. The game’s background is as follows: The sultan has increased daily taxes and the player must earn enough money to pay them. The narrator, assumed to be a salesman working in the market, pays the player at the end of each day for all items delivered. The player’s role is to deliver enough items to reach the coin goal, before the market closes.

## Game Design

### Mechanics/ Rules

* Player can click on an item to ‘put’ it in the chest and back.
* Player can click on the camel to make it move.
* Player can only put items in the chest, when the camel is back at the starting position.
* The player receives the money for the items only when the camel reaches the ‘market’s’ position.
* Player can’t put in more than 20 units of weight into the chest.
* The heavier the chest, the slower the camel walks.
* Every item has a number for a weight and a number for the coins it is worth.
* From level 3 onwards, the user can fast forward the time.
* Cold items have a blue background, hot items have a red background. They can’t be put together in the chest.
* Player can press ‘R’ to restart.
* There is a timer which indicates how long the player has until the level is finished.
* The level finishes either if the coin goal is reached or if the time runs out.

### Dynamics

* The weight has influence on the camel’s speed, meaning that it takes more time to deliver items the heavier the box is.
* Some items are more expensive and heavier than others, so the player has to take that into consideration in order to not lose time.
* The timer only starts when the user first clicks on the camel, so the player can plan out her moves before the ‘day’ has begun.
* Invalid actions cause a red flash on the screen appear and a sound to play, deterring players from making the same mistake.
* When items are sold, a ‘ka-ching’ sound is played, making it feel more rewarding.
* When the timer reaches the 5 second mark, the timer makes a sound every second and the text turns red, indicating a near end of the level.

### Aesthetics

* Our main aesthetic is challenge, because every level is more difficult and adds more complexity to the puzzle.
* Other aesthetics include:
  + narrative (there is some backstory)
  + fantasy (make-believe desert world, where you play as a delivery person)
  + sensation (positive feeling when finishing the level caused by the challenging feeling)

## Core Dynamic

Assigning a core dynamic to our game from the one’s given in the lectures was quite difficult as ~~neither of them really fit our puzzle style game~~ we felt they didn’t fully encapsulate the dynamics of our puzzle style game. ~~If we had to pick, it~~ Based on the slides our core dynamic is Spatial Reasoning, because the game utilises limited amount of space to work with per turn and the player has to place items in the chest in a certain way according to limitations (weight, type), ~~and a secondary dynamic would be Race to the End, because every level has a time-restraint and provides a harder challenge to the player.~~

A dynamic we found from another source that matches our game more is Solution, as every level ~~(apart from tutorial)~~ involves an optimal way of reaching the goal. The player also makes decisions that affect ~~various aspects of the game~~ the success of their solution, e.g. filling the chest with too many heavy items makes the camel slow, ~~hence affecting the final result~~ which could result in the player loosing.

## Level Layout

Our level layout is linear, as our game is a puzzle point and click game. Everything in the game moves linearly: the camel always moves in the horizontal direction, the items move from the inventory to the chest and then to the market (left-right), the speed up slider is horizontal and moves from left to right to emphasise the camel’s goal direction, the levels are ordered incrementally.

We used a dashboard to provide a 2D interface which would allow the player to interact with our game more easily. Game items are positioned consistently in each level so that the user doesn’t become disorientated and forget information from previous levels.

## Difficulty Tuning Process

We didn’t want to make the game too difficult, especially for the tutorial levels, however we tried to make the levels more challenging in a linear manner. For the tutorial levels we wanted to introduce the base mechanics slowly, so the player can get used to them and not be thrown into the base game with a bunch of text to memorise.

Each item has unique information which allows the user to predict or discover its impact on the game. Levels were made harder by adding more items and more restrictions (such as hot and cold items which couldn’t be put together) slowly to ensure the player is not bombarded with complexities but at the same time is still challenged.

The real challenge in tuning the difficulty lied in the price and weight of the items. To tune these, I incremented or decremented values in small increments and tested the results removing solutions and ensuring only one optimal solution to each puzzle whilst not making the solution obvious.

Originally the timer continued after each delivery, so the user had to quickly load the camel. Inexperienced players found this too challenging and often dismissed the optimal solution to the puzzle because they could not click fast enough. By making the time pause when the camel returned, this made the game more intuitive to inexperienced players and emphasised the main challenge of the game (Not click speed but forward thinking with loading the camel).