FugISTe
A Real-Life Room Escape Game

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Learnings Report

Abstract—This document reports the difficulties I had while making puzzles for the FugISTe project, starting with clue interpretation, looking into how some clues created for a puzzle were misinterpreted during the test run, and how it we minimized the possibility of misinterpretation by removing irrelevant information. Then I will address the issue of linking puzzle keys to the locks they are supposed to open, and how the hints are easily forgettable, but can be solved by just simplifying the puzzle, as it will make the puzzle less frustrating to solve. In conclusion the work on FugISTe improved my skills in creating puzzles and problems.

Index Terms—FugISTe, puzzle, create, problems, IST.

The mentioned "difficulties" are not really ... SOFT-SKILLS!

1 Introduction

This report aims to present my thoughts on what I have learned during my experiences working in the FugISTe project. It will mostly cover what I learned about creating puzzles, like how most people approach a problem and what they require to solve it.

2 Problematic Puzzles

One of the main tasks I was assigned to, on the project, was to create puzzles for the script. While I liked to create puzzles prior to joining the project, creating puzzles for a game is a new experience to me, specially for educational purposes. So in this section I will describe the two main issues I had while making puzzles for the game: figuring out how would the participants interpret the clues scattered for the puzzle and handling puzzle difficulty.

2.1 Interpreting clues

A puzzle is normally comprised of a main problem that needs to be solved, and by various subtle hints as how it can be solved. The issue is that if the hints are too obvious the puzzle is too easy, but if they are too subtle then they are ignored or worse, misinterpreted. Such a problem arose while testing the puzzles, one of the clues, a box of After Eight chocolate [1], was meant to imply that, just the receipts around the box that were after 8 o'clock would need to be read. But the participants took way too long to get the hint, while looking just at the dates of the receipts, which had no involvement whatsoever in the puzzle, because another hint referencing a time-line was being misinterpreted. So one of the lessons learned was to try minimizing misinterpretation by removing information irrelevant for solving the puzzle.

2.2 Linking keys to locks

Most of the puzzles had to result in a key, be it a literal physical key or a numerical combination, that would open a lock or help surpass an obstacle. And the puzzle should give some kind of hint on what lock does the resulting key open. But this proved more difficult to achieve than expected. Only when the reference to the lock was particularly obvious, like the key having the same color as the lock, that the participants were able to connect the two together.

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(1.0) Excellent	LEARNINGS						DOCUMENT						
(0.8) Very Good	Context×2	Skills×1	Reflect×4	Summ×.5	Concl×.5	SCORE	Struct ×.25	Ortog×.25	Exec×4	Form ×.25	Titles ×.5	File ×.5	SCORE
(0.6) Good	0.6	0.6	0.7	1.0	1.0		1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	
(0.4) Fair													
(0.2) Weak													

The main issue was that if the linking hint was not always in sight on the puzzle, it would be forgotten during the process of solving the puzzle. The worst consequence of this is that the participants may then be trying to apply a key meant for an already open lock to every other locked lock, resulting in a waste of time, and even getting stuck if they do not realize that the lock that the key belongs to is already open. The solution found for this problem is to just make the puzzle's corresponding lock obvious, unless finding the lock is the focus of the puzzle, as adding this extra level of complexity makes, in most cases, the puzzle less fun to solve.

3 Conclusion

Through this report I wanted to address some of the difficulties that I had, while creating the puzzles for the FugISTe project, and how they were surpassed. From clue misinterpretation, which can be solved by removing irrelevant information in the puzzle, to linking puzzle's key to their corresponding locks, which was solved by simplifying the puzzle by making the connection more obvious. All in all, I think I improved my ability to create puzzles and problems with my involvement in the project.

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References

[1] Wikipedia. After eight. [Online]. Available: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/After_Eight

Nuno Xu I am 21 years old and currently attending the Master's degree in Information Systems and Computer Engineering at Instituto Superior Técnico (IST). I have a passion for video games and hope to one day pursue my dream of becoming a video game developer.